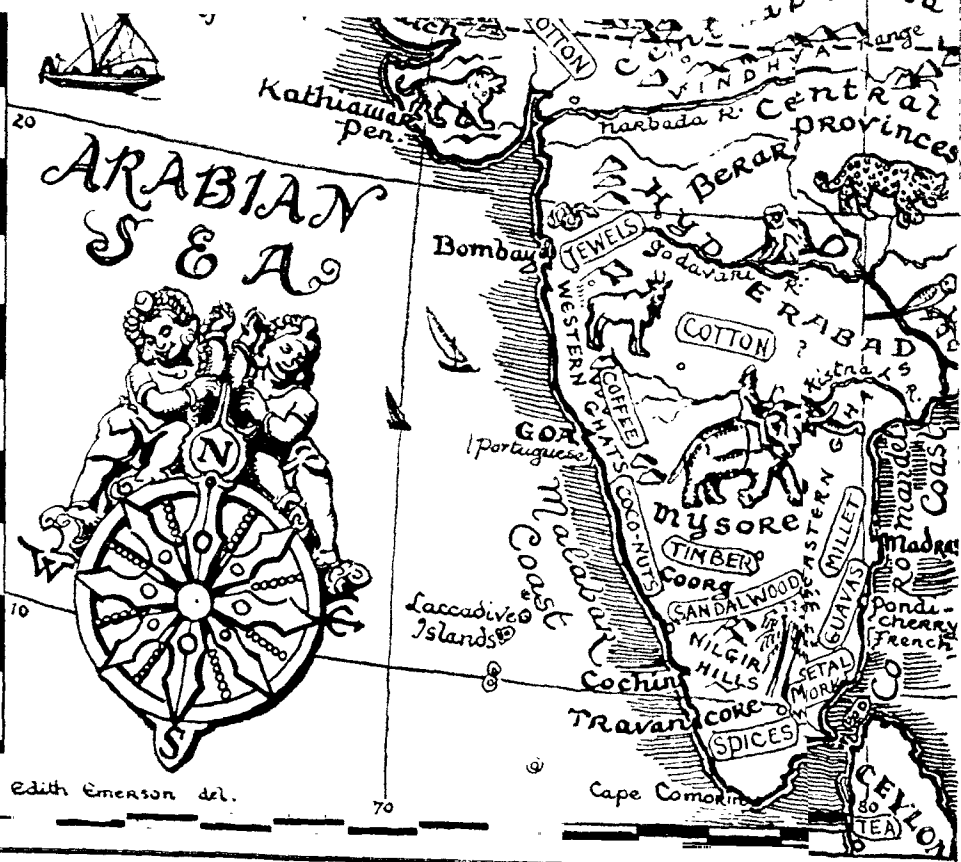


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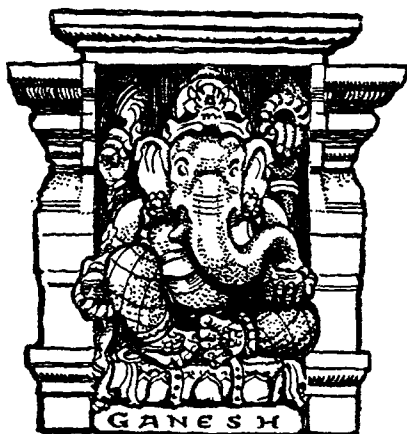


# the pageant of INDIA'S HISTORY

Vol. 1

GERTRUDE · EMERSON · SEN.

Illustrated by Edith Emerson



who blesses beginnings

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## CHAPTER I

### *The Indian Map*

BEFORE TURNING back the pages of the book of time to the first fitful traces of human life in India, let us take a look at the map of India before the recent division of the country into India and Pakistan. Certain physical peculiarities stand out at once. India is rather like a kite or an upside-down triangle. To the west lies the Arabian Sea, to the east, the Bay of Bengal, to the south, the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean. On the north the land is firmly welded to the great continent of Asia. Here the boundary consists of a high mountain wall some sixteen hundred miles long, the Himalaya, or "Abode of Snow," made up of great parallel ranges running in a general east-west direction or, more exactly, from northwest to southeast. Mountain spurs descend nearly to the coastlines at both ends of this giant barrier. Strewn among its ranges are hundreds of peaks more than twenty thousand feet high, most of them still unnamed and unclimbed. Mount Everest, at the eastern end, has an altitude of 29,002 feet. It is the world's highest peak and is only slightly lower than the mountains of the moon.

Shut in by an icy rampart on the north and by water on all its other sides, India at first appears to have been endowed by nature with a very special geographical unity of its own. Yet if oceans are a means of isolating and protecting a country, they also offer an inviting pathway for adventurous sailors. In spite of the forbidding rampart of the Himalayan chain, passes penetrate it both on the northwest and northeast, and through these, from prehistoric times up to the present, traffic has constantly flowed in both directions.

Millions of years ago, India certainly presented a picture very different from the one revealed by the modern map. The Himalaya did not exist at all, but in their place was a great sea. North of this sea stretched a vast continent, "Angara," corresponding in part to the present Siberia. Gradually, as a result of the uneven pressure of two great continental blocks, the bottom of the sea lying between them was slowly squeezed upwards into gigantic folds. The sea drained away and finally disappeared, leaving only a string of lakes in mid-Asia — and behold, the mighty Himalaya, rising nearly six miles into the air!

Proof that what is now the highest mountain range in the world was formerly the bottom of an ocean lies in the fossils of deep-sea salt-water mollusks scattered in large numbers over many of the Himalayan passes and slopes, up to an altitude of twenty thousand feet. How could they have got there, unless the rocks in which they lie embedded, or from which they have been washed out by the slow action of wind and ice, were once the ooze of some dark and silent ocean floor?

That such stupendous natural changes were wrought over an immensely long period of time goes without saying. No human beings were there to witness the giant upheaval, for man had not yet emerged on earth. Yet as geologists measure time, the Himalaya are really quite young mountains, a mere sixty-odd million years old or so, compared with such really elderly mountains as the Appalachians, twice their age, or even the familiar Alps. Strangest of all, the Himalaya are still growing! Even within historic times, the slopes have been tilted upwards at steeper angles. Far down inside the earth under the Himalayan arc, mysterious pressure forces are still at work. These are recorded at the surface in the form of frequent and violent earthquakes, nature's way of trying to relieve inner stresses and strains. North India has not yet settled down to stable conditions. In south India, on the other hand, the ancient rock formations are among the oldest in the world, and earthquakes there are extremely rare.

India can be conveniently divided into four geographical zones. First comes the sparsely populated northernmost zone of high mountains densely forested on their lower slopes and covered with eternal snow and ice on their pinnacles and crests. Next in order comes the thickly populated region of the great central river valleys and fertile plains, where most of the important cities of India are to be found. This region, stretching across the whole of northern India at its widest reach, terminates in the jungles and swamps of Assam on the east and in the arid deserts of Sind and Baluchistan on the west. The third zone is the high plateau known as the Deccan, occupying the center of the Indian peninsula. This is hemmed in by the Vindhya Range on the north, and by low abrupt hills, the Eastern and Western Ghats, running parallel to the coastlines and converging to form the Nilgiris, or "Blue Mountains," in the extreme south. Finally, there is a fourth zone consisting of a narrow palm-fringed coastal belt intersected, especially on the east, by many sandy deltas. The total area of the country amounts to a million and a half square miles, which is equal to about half the size of the United States, or to Europe without Russia. Administratively, India in modern times had been divided into so-called British India, consisting of eleven major provinces, and Indian India, made up of a great number of scattered states, some of them quite large and others no bigger than a pocket handkerchief, nominally ruled by Indians.

Several of India's mighty rivers have their sources near together in the remote ice caves of the Himalaya. Thundering down through steep gorges, gathering volume from many tributaries as they go, the Indus and the Ganges, or Ganga, wind their way in opposite directions, the one to merge itself in the Arabian Sea, the other, in the Bay of Bengal. Both are about fifteen hundred miles long. The Ganges is joined near its mouth by the Brahmaputra, or Tsang-po, the longest river of them all. It, too, rises in the Himalaya, within a hundred miles of the headwaters of the Indus, but for the greater part of its length it



flows in an easterly direction across southern Tibet. Then, at the last moment, it twists around in a great crook and enters India, where it mingles its brown torrents with those of the Ganges. Compared with these mighty streams, the rivers of the Deccan Plateau and of south India, though beautiful and romantic, are less impressive. Four of them, the Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri, all flow eastward into the Bay of Bengal. The only important rivers with a western outlet, apart from the Indus, are the Tapti and the Narmada.

Rivers have always played a vital part in Indian history. Along their banks the earliest settlements were made, the first great cities grew up. For thousands of years the teeming population of India has cultivated the fertile valleys. Is it any wonder that from very early times India's life-giving rivers came to be regarded as sacred? To this day, Hindus reverentially call the Ganges *Gangamai*, "Mother Ganges," and the pious believe that to die beside the waters of the Ganges is to insure eternal release for the soul.

It is the Indus, however, that bequeathed its name to India. In Sanskrit, the ancient language of north India, *sindhu* means river. To the people of the old settled regions of the northwest, there could naturally be only one "sindhu." The Iranians, first cousins of the Sanskrit-speaking people of India, transformed *sindhu* into *hindhu* and called the country beyond, *Hindustan*. When trade and war brought the Greeks and Iranians into close touch with each other about 600 B.C., the Greeks for the first time heard of this distant river country in southern Asia, but to suit their own manner of speech they changed the Persian *hindhu* into *indos*. Later the Romans modified this into *indus*. The English, in their turn, kept Indus for the river, and called the country India, or sometimes Hindustan.

The whole of India, together with the island of Ceylon at its tip, lies north of the Equator, in about the same general latitude as North Africa and Central America. The southern part of the

peninsula, as might be expected, has an all year round tropical climate. Central and north India, on the other hand, experience cold nights in the winter months. Though snow is unknown in the plains and the temperature always remains above freezing point, frosts sometimes occur, and in spite of bright sunshine by day the winds that sweep down from the Himalayan heights in December and January can be bitterly cold. For the greater part of India, there are really only three seasons: a mildly cold winter, from October to February; an intensely hot season, from March to June; and a rainy season, extending from June to September.

Owing to certain peculiarities in the air currents, practically the whole of the rainfall over India is confined to one period of three months. Every year, as the sun moves north, a powerful air current is set up far out in the Indian Ocean. This moisture-laden wind, known as the Southwest Monsoon, reaches the Malabar Coast, in southwest India, about the end of May. Here it precipitates its heaviest rainfall, and then it travels on diagonally across the peninsula, trailing dark curtains of rain as it goes, until it reaches the Bay of Bengal. Gathering up more moisture, it continues to move northwards and to precipitate heavy rain over the whole of Burma and the two great Indian provinces of the east, Assam and Bengal. Striking against the Himalayan wall at this point, it is deflected back in a north-westerly direction, and some three weeks after it has first made its appearance in the south, it slowly passes across the whole of northern India. The high mountains are an effective barrier, however, beyond which it cannot pass. In consequence, the southern slopes of the Himalaya receive a very heavy rainfall, but the bleak tableland of Tibet, on the other side, gets hardly any rain at all. About the beginning of September, the Southwest Monsoon finally dies out. The direction of the wind current is now reversed, and the Northeast Monsoon begins to blow. This carries with it the cool breath of Siberia and the frozen

mountains, but little or no rain. Only south India receives an appreciable amount of winter rain, drawn up out of the Bay of Bengal.

It is upon the regularity and sufficiency of the Southwest Monsoon that India chiefly depends for her agricultural prosperity. If it is late in arriving or weak in volume, if it brings excessive rain in its wake or fails altogether, then misery is in store for great numbers of the population, nine tenths of whom depend for their livelihood, in one way or another, upon agriculture. Unless the rains swell the rivers, these cannot provide an adequate supply of water for irrigation, and wells dry up. There is no grazing for animals, and the gaunt specter of famine haunts the land. Nowadays, modern science has learned how to mitigate some of the hazards of nature and to make good the shortages, through transport and other means, but science has not yet been able to produce rain when the heavens withhold it. Because of the caprices of the Southwest Monsoon, India, or some part of it, has grown accustomed to one lean year, on an average, in every five years, and serious famine conditions about once a decade.

Even granted a good monsoon, the annual rainfall is distributed very unevenly over the country as a whole. It varies from an average of five inches or less in the Rajputana desert of western India and the sandy wastes of Sind and the Punjab in the northwest, to ten feet or more along the Malabar Coast and in parts of Assam. Perhaps the small hill town of Cherra Punji, in Assam, can claim the distinction of being the wettest place on earth. Here the annual rainfall averages fifteen yards, water enough to float the largest liner or battleship in existence!

The kind of cultivation practised in different parts of India naturally depends upon such factors as latitude, rainfall or irrigation facilities available, and character of the soil. Rice is extensively grown in the torrid wet regions of Assam, Bengal and Madras. Wheat is the chief product of colder places like the Punjab and the United Provinces. Cotton thrives in Sind, the

Punjab and the Deccan. Sugar cane is grown chiefly in the United Provinces and Bihar, but is also an important crop in Madras and the Punjab. Jute fiber is produced exclusively in Assam and Bengal. Tea is confined to the hilly regions of Assam and south India. Millet, the staple food of the poor, is grown on the dry uplands in several provinces.

Such, then, is the subcontinent of India, and such are a few of the important factors which have helped to determine the life of nearly four hundred million Indians — one fifth of the human race. In their long history, they have become heirs to an immense variety of distinctive cultures, which are still in the process of being blended into a unified civilization. Giving, taking, borrowing, assimilating, creating, India has come to be what she is, perhaps the most fascinating country in the world.

As might be expected, every conceivable variety of costume is to be met with in India, stark nakedness, flowing draperies, white baggy trousers with braided velvet waistcoats, dignified, close-fitting buttoned-up coats, Norfolk jackets, shirts tucked inside or hanging out, graceful rainbow-hued *saris* commonly worn by the majority of the women, voluminous gypsylike skirts, twenty yards round the bottom, particularly characteristic of the women of Rajputana, bright-colored velvet jackets of the hill women, gay satin trousers (cotton print for the poor), fitting closely above tinkling silver anklets and little feet edged with red paint, as seen in the Punjab. Princes in gold brocade adorned with ropes of pearls and swaggering under gauze turbans, wandering ascetics with sun-faded matted locks, strangely painted foreheads and bare bodies powdered with gray ash, students in white-cotton Gandhi caps like folded paper boats — what will you not encounter on your bewildered way through India!

It is often said that India is a living ethnographic museum. This is quite true. All human types are to be found in the land, from the most primitive of shy jungle folk, who hide in the forest, dress in bark, and shoot with poisoned arrows, to the ultramodern university-educated young men and women of

Calcutta and Bombay, from the patient tillers of the soil, who bear the burden of the millions on their scorched bent backs, to the saffron-robed holy men, who renounce the world of personal desires and happiness to seek, within themselves, that "other something" which can be defined only in terms of spirit. In the south are men whose skin is like polished ebony. In the north — Kashmir, for example — are light-skinned Indians, sometimes with gray or blue eyes, scarcely to be distinguished from certain types of Europeans or Americans. In central India and elsewhere there are pygmy tribes whose stature is under five feet, and there are also the magnificent Pathans of the Northwest Frontier, bordering on Afghanistan, who tower well above six feet.

Amid this medley of human types are many complicated race mixtures. Each group has its own peculiar historical reason for being, each has contributed something specially its own to the rich and varied pattern of Indian life — for Hindu India stands, and has always stood, for the tolerant fusion of many ways of living and many ways of thinking. Already old before modern means of transport and communication had achieved a dull uniformity in life over wide areas of the earth, many of these overlapping cultures in India have survived almost intact to the present day.

In out of the way corners of south India exist primitive tribes whose kinky hair and Negroid features probably bespeak one or more waves of migration, ages back, from Africa. Other tribes in the north, almost as primitive in their level of culture, are distinctly Mongoloid, and their original homeland must have been Tibet or northeastern Asia. Still others, in central and eastern India, are possibly the remnants of some vast mysterious movement of peoples dating back to prehistoric times, and connecting India with the islands of the Pacific.

In comparison with the total population of India these really primitive folk are not numerous today, perhaps eight millions at most. They have no system of writing, no books, no records of

their own past, apart from tenacious legends. They live apart from their more civilized neighbors, whom they fear instinctively, knowing that in a world in which competition for existence grows daily more acute they face the doom of ultimate extinction. They have no weapons of self-defense against the greed of money seekers who press in to take their land and fell their trees and dig their ancient earth for metals or oil. Before the ruthless march of time, they have not the capacity for survival. Instead of dying like braves, however, they now begin to die in a civilized way, from measles and influenza. Soon they will be no more.

How can they explain to others that in spite of its poverty of possessions, in spite of its ignorance of many things, the life of the forest tribes nevertheless has its compensating values and privileges? The people may put on shoes and go to work in the city factories or coal mines, but their skill with the bow is vanishing, their poetry is dying. The sound of the wind stirring the leaves of the great trees, the glimpse down a sun-splattered glade of a peacock spreading its jeweled tail, the liquid music of a bamboo flute drawing the heart out of the breast, what place have these amid the roar and clatter of machines? The forest tribes of India have survived until now partly because no one took the trouble to interfere with them, but mainly because the India of old had room for their way of living. They were the experts of the jungle and the forest, and the whole of Indian art and literature is drenched with an intimate knowledge and love of animals and birds, of trees and flowers, which they bequeathed to it.

The early and characteristic Indian civilization, as distinct from other great civilizations and cultures of the world, has Hindu thought for its background. A Hindu is defined as one who holds certain distinctive religious beliefs and who ordinarily follows certain social practices associated with Hinduism. But Hinduism is a very elastic word, not easily defined. It represents an outgrowth of the original Vedic religion and Brahmanism.

Hindus today, with the closely related groups of Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs number, according to the latest census of 1941, 262 millions.

Nearly all the other great civilizations of the ancient world, Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Iranian, Egyptian, even Greek and Roman, lie buried with their ruined cities. The diligent spade of the archaeologist from time to time brings to light some noble fragment of the past, which seems to have little connection with a mean and alien present. Only China and India, among the great ancient countries of the world, have kept alive some measure of their onetime glory, and the link with the past is stronger in India than in China. For untold centuries, the aspirations and ideas of the Hindus, expressed through religion, art, music, literature, manners and the peculiar structure of their society have remained vital.

On the bank of the Ganges, in the United Provinces, lies the holy city of Kasi, or Benares. How old it is nobody knows, but for three thousand years at least it has stood as the symbol of sacred Indian traditions. White and red palaces and temples rise in irregular planes above the broad flights of stone steps leading down to the water's edge. From early dawn till late into the velvet night, the air above Benares is filled with the strange penetrating blast of conch shells, the noisy clang of temple bells and gongs and the plaintive music of stringed instruments. From long before dawn, every day in the year, multicolored crowds of Hindus begin to assemble on the bank. There they stand, waist-deep in swirling water, performing their ritual of prayer. Offerings of marigolds and flower garlands drift slowly downstream. As the sun rises out of the opal clouds, a golden light floods the ancient city, and colors glow like jewels. The bathers silently repeat their age-old mystic hymns.

Benares at dawn is unbelievable. The whole of India, its hoary traditions, its ancient past receding far back beyond the verge of recorded time, seems to be gathered up and concentrated in this single suspended moment. Who can say when Indian

thought first began to detach itself from the little here and now, the little me and mine, to spread its wings and soar aloft on giant flights into the Unknown?

In race, Hindus are mainly a blend, in varying degrees, of two great families of mankind, Dravidian and Aryan. Dravidian is the name given to the dark-skinned Dravidian-speaking stock already inhabiting Dravida, the old name for south India, at the time when the curtain of history rises on the Indian peninsula. There is no evidence that the Dravidians ever entered India from outside, though relations of one sort or another between the Dravidians and Africa, or between the Dravidians and the Mediterranean people, may have existed from remote antiquity. About the Aryans, however, scholars still quarrel violently.

Did the Aryans, or Aryas, whose name originally meant "kinsmen" and later came to mean "noble," enter India from the northwest, most probably between 3000 and 2000 B.C., or did they spread outward, during an even earlier age, from northern India itself? Did two branches of the same sturdy race migrate in opposite directions, one to the northwest and Europe, the other to the southeast and India, from some first homeland in Asia Minor or southern Russia beyond the Caucasus, driven by necessity through the drying up of their pasture lands? There are equally good arguments to support both views, and it is not likely that any final answer will ever be found. All that is known for certain is that the Aryan people of India and Persia and the Aryan people of Greece and Europe, however different they may seem, have shared a remote common ancestry and had a common parent language, and they still reflect, in many of their deepest ideas and most firmly established customs, a common source of inspiration.

This significant discovery first came to light through the comparatively modern science of philology, the study of root words and syntax. Obviously, where these are unmistakably alike or similar, some kind of parent relationship must have existed. Philology has shown that all the languages and dialects of the

world can really be reduced to eight or nine great families. These are Aryan, Semitic, Hamitic, Turanian, Tibetan-Chinese, Dravidian, Austric, Amerindian (American Indian), and a group of related African languages. To the great Aryan family belong more languages, living and dead, than to any other single group. English, Celtic, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Armenian, Latin, Greek, old and modern Persian, Sanskrit and the half dozen modern languages spoken in northern India today are all descended from one original source, the ancient Aryan tongue. One can see the relation at a glance between Sanskrit *pitri*, *matri*, Bengali *pita*, *mata*, Greek *pater*, *mētēr*, Latin *pater*, *mater*, French *père*, *mère*, German *Vater*, *Mutter*, English *father*, *mother*.

According to their own account, the early Indian Aryans waged a fierce war over a long period of time with the dark-skinned inhabitants of India, presumably the Dravidians, whom they found in possession of the land. Gradually they made themselves masters of the whole of north India. They did not attempt to advance by force of arms beyond the dividing line of the Vindhya, however, but contented themselves with a gradual cultural conquest of the southern part of the peninsula. But this Aryan conquest of ancient India was by no means entirely a one-sided affair. The Dravidians, retreating before the conquerors, were able to keep alive their own type of civilization. As time passed, Aryan and Dravidian inevitably intermingled, and the haughty Aryan was ultimately compelled to admit vast groups of non-Aryans into his society and to welcome some of the popular Dravidian gods and goddesses to a place of honor beside his own *devas*, or "shining ones." Out of the contact of these two ancient races and the mingling and fusion of their two great civilizations, Hinduism emerged.

Throughout long centuries, many other streams of influence have entered India. From central and western Asia, time and again, invading hordes have poured down into the Indian plains. A few have come as refugees. Most have been pushed by hunger,

passion for plunder or lust for power. Persian, Greek, Parthian, Scythian, Hun, Turk, Afghan, Arab, Mongol, European, have all cut their way into India and helped themselves to what they could. Some of the invaders returned swiftly whence they came, loaded with ill-got booty. Some settled down and made India their home for a century or two, leaving behind them, when they disappeared, curious blendings of blood and the yeast of new ideas creating new forms of art, new costumes and customs, new religious beliefs. The ninety-two million Muslims of India today, who make up a fourth of the total population, are India's permanent inheritance from more than a thousand years of such invasions from Asia. In the seventh century, fleeing before some of those same Muslims who shortly after invaded India, a little band of Persian fire worshippers, of the Zoroastrian faith, found a hospitable welcome in India. Today, 125,000 Parsis, mostly living in the province of Bombay, are their descendants. Two small sects of Indian Jews and a very ancient sect of Syrian Christians reside in Malabar. In modern times have come the invasions of the white Europeans, by sea. Their number has diminished since British rule ended on August 15, 1947, but through the missionary efforts of their followers, India's Christian community has multiplied to seven millions.

Variety is thus deeply inherent in Indian life. It is to be found in the extremes of the natural environment. It is in the very blood of the inhabitants. It expresses itself in a rich and imaginative art, in wide-ranging thought. "Variety in unity" was the basic plan of life as conceived by the wise teacher-saints of ancient India. With immense vitality, India still continues to throw off different types and at heart remains tolerant of them all.

## CHAPTER II

### *Dawn Over India*

MANKIND'S EARLIEST written records, with which history properly begins, do not go back more than about six thousand years. Yet hundreds of thousands of years before primitive man had the bright idea of drawing symbols to express what he wanted to say, he was living here on this earth. Traces of his existence in the form of the stone tools he used have been found almost everywhere — in Europe, in Africa, in the two Americas, in the distant islands of the Pacific Ocean and in all parts of Asia including India.

It seems a curious coincidence that all the prehistoric stone tools in the world, wherever they are found, are remarkably alike. The only conclusion is that during the long ages before the use of metals was discovered or writing was invented, men everywhere performed similar tasks in a more or less similar way. A universal Stone Age culture existed — so called from the material of the tools in use. Though wood, too, was doubtless employed, perishable wooden articles have naturally not survived, and it is from their stones alone that we try to form some dim idea of how our remotest ancestors lived on this earth.

Stone Age man has left plenty of traces in India. Typical tools have been picked up in great quantities in many widely scattered places, mostly on the surface of the ground, but exploration for ancient remains of human life has only recently been undertaken in India, and the findings are still very incomplete and haphazard. The oldest Indian Stone Age tools are made of a light-colored quartzite, a volcanic rock much harder than flint. The commonest tool is a hand ax, flaked off on both sides. In the

region of the Sabamati River, in western India, layers bearing implements of the earlier and later periods of the Stone Age have been found to be separated by a gravel deposit of two hundred feet. This gives some idea of the length of time for the transition to be effected.

Neolithic settlements in central India, in Bengal, along the Indus in the northwest, in the independent state of Kashmir and in many other places, show that in neolithic times the favorite instrument in India was the celt, resembling a chisel, but many different kinds of tools were already being used. In this period dark-colored volcanic traprock was the most common material, but smaller tools, such as those picked up in the Vindhya region and elsewhere, were often made of beautifully tinted or translucent stones like crystals, agate, chalcedony, jasper, carnelian and chert. A most interesting New Stone Age tool factory was unearthed not very long ago in the province of Madras, in south India. It contained tools in every stage of manufacture, including knives, scrapers, adzes, chisels, hammers, axes, arrowheads, spearheads, maceheads, mortars and pestles — everything, in fact, which primitive man had as yet devised to help him in his stern struggle with nature.

There are several cave sites in India where primitive rock paintings have been discovered. They lie in the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Madras. Some of these rock paintings are believed to go back to prehistoric times, though it is not easy to fix a date for paintings of this type. People who have remained in a primitive state of development are still producing them to this day, like the American Indians, for example. Stone implements and bones of animals of both extinct and living species found in or near the Indian caves indicate high antiquity. The Indian paintings generally follow the style of similar prehistoric paintings in Spain and Africa. They depict in a most realistic way animals running or leaping, warriors in pursuit or fighting with one another, birds flying. There is no attempt to portray any background, and the figures are quite

small in size. Outlines and solid color are painted in a brownish pigment, made from red oxide of iron. Sometimes yellow is also used. Occasionally what seem to be later paintings are superimposed on earlier ones. The animals of the paintings are the familiar elephants, buffaloes, goats, deer, horses, rhinoceroses and monkeys of present-day India.

In the usual order of things, India, like the rest of the ancient world, should have passed through a Copper and Bronze Age before reaching the Iron Age, and north India, indeed, seems to have done so. Stretching in a long line from Baluchistan and the Indus Valley all the way to Bengal are more than a hundred sites where primitive copper objects have been located. They consist of barbed harpoons, swords, chisels, spearheads and so forth. In one of these sites, Gungeria, in the Central Provinces, 424 hammered copper objects, equal in weight to 828 pounds, were unearthed, along with 102 thin silver plates. Old copper mines of the Chota Nagpur district, not far distant, were probably the chief source of the raw material for what must have been an extensive copper industry in north India in those early days. The ruined site of Mohenjo-daro, in Sind, first excavated a quarter of a century ago, has revealed that the inhabitants of this ancient Indian city, typical of the well-established Indus civilization of 3000 B.C., were perfectly familiar with copper and bronze, but not a single object of iron has been discovered there.

South India, on the other hand, presents a curious, unsolved archaeological puzzle. Primitive copper, bronze and iron objects have all been found lying promiscuously together in prehistoric sites, but iron objects far outnumber those of copper and bronze. Two explanations have been put forward. Either south India passed directly from the Stone Age into the Iron Age without any middle period at all — the northern invaders having brought knowledge of all the metals with them at the same time — or else long before and independently of the rest of the world, south India had discovered iron for itself. Numerous iron deposits exist in the south, easily worked from the surface, and remains

of primitive forges, forge tools and slag heaps are abundant. Remarkable skill in mining and metalwork was certainly highly developed in south India from remote times. A prehistoric gold mine exists at Maski, in Hyderabad State, and the settlement close by appears to have been in continuous occupation from neolithic times. Polished stone implements, black and red pottery, beads, shell ornaments, small terra-cotta figurines, the unique find of a tiny cobra head cut from amethyst, and many objects of metal have come from this fascinating spot.

In south India, remains of primitive pottery and articles of polished stone and metal are most commonly found in the megalithic sites associated with prehistoric burials. Such ancient burial sites exist in every country of the world. One of the best-known examples is Stonehenge, in England. Large unhewn stones, or monoliths, are laid or set in various patterns technically described as cairns, circles, menhirs, cromlechs, dolmens or barrows. The burial chambers are sometimes above ground, sometimes excavated in the rock beneath. So huge are some of the megalithic stones that it seems as if only a race of giants, now extinct, could ever have moved them. Possibly the tombstones of today are the last vestige of the practice of our Stone Age ancestors who in this way sought to place an imperishable mark over their graves.

The enormous number of such sites in south India — it is said that about a million of them are to be found in the Deccan Plateau alone — show how densely populated this region was in prehistoric times. It is impossible to say how old the sites really are. If iron was an independent discovery in south India, then the south Indian megalithic remains, which frequently contain iron objects, may well date back to a period earlier than 1000 B.C. As to who these indefatigable prehistoric Indian stone-builders were, all the evidence suggests that they were no other than the ancestors of the Dravidian-speaking people of south India today, who number about eighty millions.

One of the most interesting of the prehistoric sites of south

India is a great burial ground which has been discovered in the Tinnevely district of Madras, at the extremity of the peninsula. It covers an area of 114 acres. Funerary urns supported on rings and containing human skeletons or collections of human bones were found ranged in pits or chambers excavated from the solid rock, originally closed with stone slabs. Rice husks and decayed grain in the urns, or in smaller jars of polished black and red ware, show that food offerings were made to the dead at the time of burial. Household and personal articles, including bronze bowls, gold ornaments, iron swords, carnelian beads and small figures of water buffaloes and other animals were also dug up at this place. Though urn burial seems to have been widely practised in south India, terra-cotta or stone sarcophagi with legs have also been discovered in certain places.

From the strikingly uniform megalithic remains of southern India, it is possible to gain some idea of the early culture which existed there at the dawn of Indian history. The cultivation of rice was certainly practised, and it seems that the ancestors of the Dravidian-speaking people were the first people in the world to grow rice. The very word "rice" comes from the Tamil word *arisi*, and Tamil, spoken throughout Madras, is the oldest of the Dravidian languages. Rice cultivation was no doubt carried on in prehistoric times, as it still is everywhere in tropical Asia, with the help of the water buffalo. The presence of numerous terra-cotta spindles in the Indian grave chambers, taken together with the fact that cotton is a native plant of the Deccan, is proof enough that the ancient inhabitants of south India were familiar with spinning and undoubtedly made cotton cloth. They were also expert fishermen. On the coast close to the Tinnevely burial ground are the remains of a very ancient pearl-fisheries establishment, and it is quite possible that even in neolithic times Dravidian traders went out from this pearl center on long adventurous voyages. Shells were also extensively used in the making of ornaments. Shell remains in inland sites like

Maski bear mute witness to the important trade in shell carried on in India from earliest times.

Unfortunately, no great prehistoric towns or cities like those uncovered in northwestern India have as yet been discovered in southern India, though Aryan tradition credits the pre-Aryan inhabitants with being architects and city builders of great skill. In describing their earliest encounters with them, the Aryans speak of their "thirty iron towns" and their "hundred stone forts." The oldest surviving Dravidian literature is apparently some two to three thousand years younger than the Aryan Sanskrit literature which has been so wonderfully preserved. It is possible, however, that some form of ancient writing existed among the ancestors of the Dravidian-speaking people. On some of the burial urns peculiar marks or symbols are thought by certain authorities to be an undeciphered script. Since writing was originally used for keeping accounts, the industrious Indian traders and merchants of the south may well have evolved their own system of written records. All the evidence points to the existence of a widespread and stable prehistoric culture throughout south India.

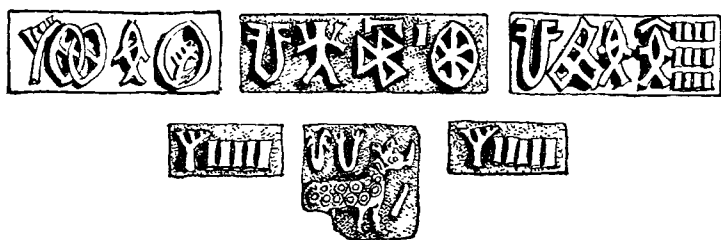
It is now generally believed that at some very early period, before they came into conflict with the Aryan-speaking people and were driven south, Dravidians were in occupation of the greater part of India. The Gonds, one of the primitive tribes dwelling in central India, speak a Dravidian dialect, and to this day there is a small unexplained "island" of Dravidian-speaking people living in Baluchistan, on the far side of the Indus. They bear no resemblance in racial qualities to the South Indians of today, nor are they known to have been in contact with any Dravidian culture within historical times. Yet their language, Brahui, belongs to the Dravidian family, and it is clear that Dravidian influences must have existed in this northwestern corner of India in the remote past. The Indus Valley itself shelters in its dry sands the material evidence of an advanced pre-Aryan

city civilization dating back five thousand years. Some believe that this type of civilization was essentially Dravidian in origin.

Archaeological researches carried on since 1922 make it possible to say that at least five thousand years ago, only a very short time after the Sphinx and the Pyramids rose in Egypt, and at the very same time when the great Sumerian civilization was flourishing at places like Kish and Tell-Asmar, and the royal palaces and tombs were being built at Ur, in Mesopotamia, north-western India, too, boasted an advanced and typical civilization of its own. The Indus civilization, as it is now officially called, was not confined to the Indus Valley. It extended over an area considerably greater than the contemporary Egypt or Sumer. It included not only Sind and the Punjab, but Baluchistan and Seistan on the west and Kathiawar on the south. Traces of the same civilization have been discovered on the border of Rajputana, and a few recent finds suggest that it may even have extended into the Ganges Valley.

This utterly unguessed Indus civilization is one of the most fascinating and important archaeological discoveries of the twentieth century. In 1922, an Indian archaeologist, R. D. Banerji, began to investigate some second-century Buddhist ruins in Sind, at a spot locally known as Mohenjo-daro, "place of the dead." This lay on the old bank of the Indus four miles from the present course of the river and some two hundred miles north of Karachi. Mr. Banerji soon ascertained that the bricks used for a structure crowning a low hill had been dug from the ruins of an ancient city which lay directly beneath and around the later Buddhist monument. The Archaeological Department of India at once realized the importance of his discovery and took over the task of making a thorough exploration.

Some fifty years earlier, certain small stone seals engraved with a mysterious script, not like any other seals known in the ancient world, had begun to turn up in the neighborhood of Harappa, in the Punjab, 450 miles north of Mohenjo-daro. Ha-



Seals from the Indus Valley of about 3000 B.C.

rappa, recognized as an important ancient site, is situated in the vicinity of the old bed of the Ravi, a branch of the Indus. Unfortunately, it had been used by neighboring villagers for an indefinite period as a brick quarry, and, worse still, it had subsequently been made to supply quantities of ballast for railway construction. As an archaeological site, therefore, it had been ruined. In the course of the new excavations at Mohenjo-daro, hundreds of seals like those already known from Harappa were unearthed. A few similar seals also presently came to light from the ancient Sumerian cities of Kish, Ur and Tell-Asmar, eighteen of them altogether. One extracted from a layer of debris at Kish, beneath a temple which could be definitely dated as of the third millennium B.C., gave the first clue to the genuine antiquity of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro.

Nor were these lonely cities of the time. Nal in Baluchistan, Amri, Jhukar, Lohumjo-daro and Chanhudaro, in Sind, Kotla Nihang, in the Punjab, and many other allied sites, were all found to belong to about the same period. The indefatigable explorer, Sir Aurel Stein, traced an ancient caravan road strung with a whole series of prehistoric settlements running from northwest India and Baluchistan by way of the Makran Coast and Iran to Mesopotamia. It is now certain from a study of the pottery remains, from beads of Mohenjo-daro and Ur, incised with an identical pattern, from the discovery of Indus seals far afield, that a flourishing trade was once carried on between these ancient centers. A most interesting and important object dug up at Mohenjo-daro within the past decade by Dr. C. L. Fabri is a

pottery jar of a type which can be dated between 2800 and 2500 B.C., with a Sumero-Babylonian inscription in cuneiform characters, the special nail-writing of ancient Mesopotamia.



Inscription from Mohenjo-Daro, c. 2500 B.C.

The Indus civilization clearly belongs to the period following the Neolithic and preceding the Iron Age, that is, to the latter part of the third millennium B.C. Flint knives and articles of stone were still in common use, and copper and bronze objects were plentiful, but iron was not yet known. No outstandingly magnificent or valuable works of art, such as have given supreme distinction to the ancient centers in Sumer, Egypt, Crete and Troy, have so far been discovered in the Indus Valley. Neither have any palaces or royal tombs come to light among the ruins there. It was chiefly upon such buildings that the ancient artists of other lands lavished all their skill and ingenuity, and the State its wealth. On the other hand, the Indus cities reflect an extraordinarily high degree of comfort for ordinary people, and they are the oldest planned cities ever discovered.

The excavated area of Mohenjo-daro, the most important example of an Indus city of ancient times, covers more than 240 acres. Three different levels of occupation, one on top of an-



Inscription from Mohenjo-Daro

other, have so far been uncovered. The city was continuously lived in for a period of at least six hundred years, from 3300 to 2700 B.C., after which it was apparently deserted. The annual flooding of the Indus, resulting in a gradual silting up of the surrounding plain, is the most plausible explanation for the rebuilding of the city at successively higher levels. The solid foun-

dations and walls of the lowest city extend down considerably below the present water level, making deeper digging impossible. The city of the lowest level, however, is the most solidly built and covers the largest area, and the pottery of the deeper layers is superior in workmanship to any found in the upper levels. There is nothing experimental about the planning of the original city. Rather, it was the product of a long-established civilization.

The streets were broad and straight, all running north and south, or east and west. The principal street was thirty-three feet wide. Both sides of the streets were flanked with houses substantially built of burnt bricks. Many of them must have been two or more stories high, since stairways leading upward are found attached to nearly all the houses. They were also provided with open courtyards, private wells and bathrooms. One of the most striking features of the ancient city is the excellent drainage system it maintained. Pottery pipes or well-constructed channels set in the outer walls carried the waste water and refuse from individual houses down to the large street drains. These were made of stone, carefully cemented and waterproofed with asphalt, and were covered with loose stones or large bricks which could be easily removed to facilitate the process of cleaning. A few buildings, larger than the average, may have served some public purposes, but no temples or palaces, recognizable as such, have been found. The most important single construction at Mohenjo-daro is a large bathing tank, thirty-nine feet long, twenty-three feet wide and eight feet deep, with broad steps leading down at both ends to the paved floor. The lining of the tank is three to four feet thick and is made of bricks laid in gypsum backed by an inch of bitumen. Behind the arcaded quadrangle surrounding the tank are various chambers and halls.

The houses of Mohenjo-daro are strangely devoid of paintings or decorations of any sort. Perhaps the city was a busy river port whose occupants were more concerned with trade and personal comfort than with art. The debris, however, has yielded thou-

sands of articles of practical daily use, many of which show that in the minor arts the Mohenjo-darians had attained masterly skill.

Although the greater part of the pottery is plain, there is a distinctive red and black painted ware polished to the point of resembling lacquer. Clay was easily procured from the banks of the river near by. It was turned on a fast wheel, given a slip of red ochre upon which designs were painted in black manganese and sometimes in other colors, and was then fired in well-made round ovens. Finally it was burnished. Typical Indus designs take the form of intersecting circles, triangles, trefoils, tree and vegetable patterns and ribbon borders. A few specimens have designs of animals, fish, birds and human beings. One pottery fragment from Harappa preserves the tracing of a boat and oarsmen. Among implements and tools, a bronze adze ten inches long, a portion of a ruler with divisions accurately marked, a saw with offset teeth and graded weights and scales are the most interesting. Chairs, spoons of tortoise shell, silver drinking cups and cosmetic boxes have also been collected from among the ruins.

The large population of Mohenjo-daro could scarcely have maintained itself without agriculture, and the surrounding plain must have been extensively cultivated, although oddly enough very few agricultural tools have been discovered. Numerous grinding stones have been found, however, and chemists have been able to identify carbonized grains of barley and wheat, and seeds of melons and dates, taken from kitchen jars. Jars were also found which contained bones of animals and fish. That the people knew how to spin and weave is obvious from the countless spindles of pottery and glazed ware which have turned up. A stone bust of a man wears over his left shoulder a shawl decorated in a three-leaved pattern. One of the most remarkable finds is an actual bit of cotton cloth, the oldest piece of cotton cloth known to the world, miraculously preserved in the corroded surface of a silver jar of jewelry dug up from its original hiding

place under a floor in one of the houses. It has helped to establish the claim that Indians were the first users of cotton cloth. The rest of the ancient world, except the Chinese, who dressed in silk, used linen, wool, skins or bark, before they became acquainted with cotton.

From the amount of jewelry unearthed it is clear that the people of Mohenjo-daro dearly loved to adorn themselves, and various small statuettes of stone, clay and bronze show exactly their mode of dress. The women wore short skirts which they kept in place with elaborate girdles, and they also wore rings, bracelets, necklaces, nose studs and hair ornaments. Their necklaces were made of beads of gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, jadeite or carnelian, sometimes inlaid. The beads were beautifully polished and always perfectly bored, showing a remarkably high standard of the stonemason's art. Both men and women took great pains with their hair. They combed it with ivory combs and dressed it with thin gold fillets or ornamental hairpins. The men appear to have followed the fashion of shaving the upper lip but keeping a thick beard. Bronze razors of four different patterns have been found.

Another prominent characteristic of the Indus people was their love of children. Innumerable toys have come to light, such as miniature household articles, clay whistles in the form of birds, marbles and gamesmen, animals with wagging heads, little two-wheeled carts drawn by humped oxen. A remarkable bronze model of such a cart was found at Chanhu-daro, with the driver actually seated in it, holding a whip. Gambling must have been a fairly common amusement of the older people, if large numbers of dice made from ivory or stone are a correct indication. A charming bronze figurine of a dancing girl shows appreciation of the art of dancing, and representations of various kinds of musical instruments carved on the seals are an expression of a love of music.

The artistic skill and refinement of the people is reflected in the workmanship of articles for everyday use, but above all in

the unique Indus Valley seals or amulets. These are usually made of soft white limestone and are most commonly square, measuring from a half inch to two and a half inches across. A perforated knob at the back would suggest that they were intended to be strung on a cord and perhaps worn on the arm or neck. The distinctive and characteristic feature of the Indus seals is the finely carved animal form and the line or two of pictographic writing appearing on the front face. This same sort of writing is occasionally traced on metal tools and pottery, but no large stone inscriptions have been found. Up to now, in spite of many valiant efforts, the Indus script has not been successfully deciphered. It is not even known what the Indus language was, and until and unless there is some lucky find, perhaps of a two-language seal, there is little hope that the secret of the mysterious language and script can be solved.

What gives the Indus seals their special stamp, apart from the distinctive script, is the fact that they are engraved with characteristically Indian animals, though sometimes they are also adorned with fantastic mythological creatures possessing two or three heads, or the fabulous unicorn. The unicorn, in fact, seems to have been a great favorite with the Indus people, since more seals are found with this device than with any other. The humped Indian bull, however, is extremely popular, as are also the elephant, the tiger, the buffalo, the rhinoceros, the fish-eating crocodile, the goat and the antelope. There are no elephants or tigers in Sind today, but on the strength of the seals it is accepted that they formerly roamed the Indus Valley, and in this case the climate must have been wetter in those days than it is now. Indeed, the provision for so much drainage in the houses of Mohenjo-daro seems to bear out such a belief. Usually the seal-animal is seen in profile, with a queer object in front of it, either a food trough or a cult object. It is possible that the animals were worshipped as symbols of different deities, after the Egyptian fashion. Not a few of the seals depict a fight between



SEALS from the INDUS Valley . 5000 yrs. old



two fantastic animals or between a man and an animal. One seal portrays what appears to be a three-headed horned deity seated cross-legged on a low stool or throne, in the posture traditionally associated in India with religious meditation. Around this figure are grouped various animals, as if in devotion. Another seal shows a tree spirit with a man bowing before it.

Here, evidently, we have a recording of some aspects of the religious beliefs of the early Indus people. It has been held that the three-headed deity surrounded by animals is probably a representation of the god Shiva, whose worship is familiar among Hindus all over India today. Tree worship was obviously practised, as it still is among many primitive tribes. Most popular of all, however, was the worship of the Mother Goddess, whose clay images have been found at Mohenjo-daro in great numbers. She was universally worshipped in ancient times throughout western Asia and in India, and it is not surprising to find the Indus people among her ardent devotees.

The sudden end of the well-established Indus culture remains unexplained. The lost and forgotten cities now excavated reveal that none was occupied after about 2500 B.C. Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were apparently deserted first, Chanhudaro a century or two later. A burial ground at Harappa has yielded jars and urns with fragments of bones or ashes, but no similar site has yet been found at or near Mohenjo-daro. It may be hidden in the surrounding sands, or lie buried beneath the waters of the shifting Indus. Startled excavators at Mohenjo-daro came upon a few skeletons in distorted positions at the bottom of a staircase leading to a well, and again in one of the streets, as if the victims had been suddenly trapped, or had died in some agonizing epidemic. Although Harappa had a city wall, no such wall has been found at Mohenjo-daro, and the singular absence of weapons in any large numbers and the poor quality of those which do exist is provocative of thought. Did some warlike neighbors fall upon the unsuspecting Indus cities, and after destroying them carry the inhabitants off into captivity? Or did the floodwaters of the

Indus merely rise one night without warning, drowning the people, overwhelming the land?

Certainly, in later times, northwestern India belonged to a very different people, who appear to have had no connection whatever with the mysterious early inhabitants of the Indus Valley.

### CHAPTER III

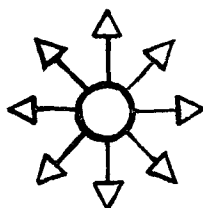
#### *Aryan Morning*

INDIAN TRADITION, the story of the gradual domination of India by the Aryans, begins with the Indian Flood, first described in an ancient Sanskrit work of about 1000 or 800 B.C., the *Satapatha Brahmana*. After the subsidence of the waters, Manu, a mythical descendant of the Sun-god, came down from the top of a mountain where he had tied his boat after being guided to safety by a big fish. He then divided the land among his offspring, and all the later royal Aryan dynasties of India are said to be descended from his nine sons and one daughter. The eldest son, Ikshvaku, became king of Ayodhya and founder of the great line of solar kings. Pururavas, son of his daughter by the grandson of the Moon-god, became king of Prathisthana (Allahabad) and founder of the line of lunar kings. The most illustrious Indian princes to this day produce genealogies which trace their ancestry by this means to the sun or the moon!

The more prosaic mind of scholars may not be content to accept Indian mythology as an explanation of the origin of the Indo-Aryan people, and ever since Europe discovered Sanskrit a little more than a century and a half ago, European scholars have been busy trying to prove that the Aryan Indians migrated to India from some other place. Scandinavia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Turkey and Armenia have all been put forward as possible original homelands. Actually, however, only one relevant fact and one certain date are known.

An archaeological signpost has been discovered in Asia Minor, near Ankara, the present Turkish capital. The little village of Bhogaz-Koï marks the site of the onetime capital of the powerful

Hittite kingdom, which came into prominence in the twentieth century B.C. Here, two Hittite inscriptions in the cuneiform writing record a victory of the Hittites over their southern neighbors the Mitanis, and mention a royal marriage arranged to cement the peace treaty between the two nations. Five Aryan divinities are invoked as witnesses or are invited to give their blessings to the royal pair, Indra, Varuna, Mitra, the Asvins under the name of Nasatya (the familiar Gemini of the western zodiac). Since this Hittite victory is definitely known to have taken place in or about 1400 B.C., it is clear that Aryan gods were being wor-



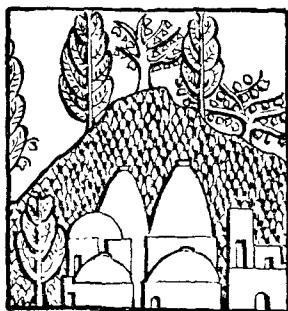
Emblem from Mohenjo-Daro. The sun with arrows = eyes.

shipped in Asia Minor at this date. But which way does the signpost point? Were the Aryans then on their trek to India from some unknown upland in the north, or had Indo-Aryan culture already expanded from India as far as Asia Minor? Who can answer?

The early Indo-Aryans, subject of so much controversy, have left behind a vast literature, but it is not in the form of race annals or works dealing with history or geography. Nevertheless, it is a mine of information about these same early Indo-Aryans, and it has the unique advantage of having been composed by themselves.

The *Rig-veda*, made up of 1028 hymns addressed to various deities and divided into ten books, the oldest existing memorial of the Aryan race, may without question be called the oldest book in the world. Whether it belongs to a period of 3000 B.C., or somewhat earlier, or to 2000 B.C., or a little later, is not so very

important after all. The Sanskrit word *veda* (*e* pronounced as in *they*) means knowledge. The same root appears in the English words *wisdom* and *wit*. By the time we make our first real acquaintance with the ancient Indo-Aryans, they had already collected and arranged their vast body of wisdom into four works, known as the four Vedas. Of these, the *Rig-veda*, on the basis of its archaic Sanskrit, is held to be the earliest. Afterwards, a number of manuals, or textbooks, and philosophic works to

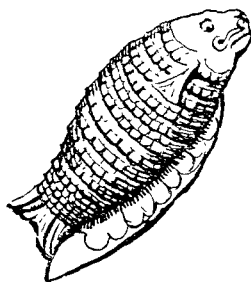


Vishnu temples, royal tombs and palaces with the Holy Mountain Meru or Mandara. Eighth century B.C.

explain the Vedas, were composed. This Vedic literature was, of course, the work of many authors, and its composition must have covered a very long time, possibly two thousand years. It is the source of all our knowledge about the early Indo-Aryan people, their life, their thought, their ideals.

The Vedic Aryans, as the unwinding of the long scroll begins, are found actively engaged in wresting the land of the Seven Rivers represented by the Indus and its principal tributaries (now called the Punjab, or "Five Rivers") from those previously possessing it. The westernmost limit of Aryan wanderings can be traced by the names of rivers unmistakably identified with the present-day rivers of eastern Afghanistan. The Ganges and Jumna are mentioned in the *Rig-veda*, but the main setting of Aryan activity is northwestern India, and there is no reference

to any earlier homeland, to any land of sacred memories other than the Himalaya. The Indus Valley, as we have already seen, was no mere wilderness. It must have been substantially settled by 3000 B.C. Great cities had grown up, and trade and agriculture flourished. Writing and the arts were well developed. Of all this, however, the *Rig-veda* curiously has nothing to say. The advancing Vedic Aryans call their enemies simply *dasas*, or *dasyus* — “slaves” — or by various tribal names such as Danava, Daitya, Simyu, Pisacha, Pani, Rakshasa or Naga. At a much later date, when all these tribes had been absorbed by the Aryan conquest, the names lost their tribal significance and several of them came to stand for races of legendary and mythological beings, more or less unfriendly to men, like giants and demons.



The Fish Incarnation of Vishnu.

Like most victors, the Aryans felt great contempt for the beaten foe, and their color prejudice is especially noticeable. The dasyus are described as “black-skinned,” “noseless,” “malignant,” and “non-sacrificing.” They “yell hideously like dogs.” At the same time, their tribes are still many, and the Aryans as yet are few. Indra, the Aryan War-god, is often called upon in the hymns with a mixture of praise and flattery to come into the battle on the side of his worshippers. He is invited to make good use of his thunderbolt, to collect the heads of the enemy and crush them under his wide foot. “Indra protects his Aryan worshippers in war. He who protects him on countless occasions,

protects him in all wars. He subdues the people who do not perform sacrifices for the benefit of men. He flays the enemy of his black skin and kills and reduces him to ashes. Indra, who slew Vritra and stormed towns, has destroyed the black Dasas and has made the earth and water for the Aryans, and fulfilled the wishes of the sacrificer." \*

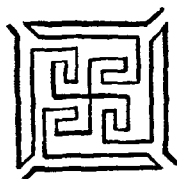
The Aryans are depicted as driving furiously into battle on chariots drawn by horses, the warrior standing on the left side of the charioteer. The dasyus evidently were not accustomed to horses, and this new form of fighting spread fear and consternation among them. "The expert charioteer stands on his chariot and drives his horses wheresoever he will. The reins restrain the horses from behind. Sing of their glory! The horses raise the dust with their hoofs and career over the field with the chariot, with loud neighings. They do not retreat, but trample the marauding enemies under their feet." Swords, battle-axes, javelins and slings were wielded by the Aryan warriors, but chief of all weapons was the bow, first among warriors, the archer. The bow was large and was drawn to the ear. At the archer's back hung a quiver of reed arrows, feathered and pointed with deerhorn or metal. A leather guard protected his arm from the friction of the cowhide bowstring. Thus does the Vedic chant praise the bow: "We will win cattle with the bow, we will win with the bow. We will conquer the fierce and proud enemy with the bow. May the bow foil the desires of the enemy! We will spread our conquest on all sides with the bow."

Spreading their conquest after this fashion, the Aryans slowly established themselves throughout the greater part of northern India. They advanced as warriors, but their herds and their womenfolk accompanied them, and some hymns of the *Rig-veda* give very human glimpses of the tribes struggling on wearily in

\* In this chapter excerpts from hymns of the *Rig-veda*, sometimes quoted in condensed form, are taken from translations appearing in *A History of Indian Literature*, by Herbert H. Gowan, from Volume I, by Romesh Chunder Dutt, in the *History of India*, edited by A. V. Williams Jackson, and from *Women in Ancient India*, by Clarisse Bader.

search of pasture lands. Pushan, the Sun as pathfinder for herdsmen, is invoked on such occasions: "O Pushan, help us to finish our journey and remove all dangers. O Son of the Clouds, do thou march before us. O Pushan, do thou remove from our path him who would lead us astray, who strikes and plunders and does wrong. Do thou trample under thy foot that wily robber who intercepts journeys. O Pushan, devise means on this journey. Lead us to pleasant tracts covered with green grass. Let there be no extreme heat by the way." Or Brihaspati, the Lord of Prayer, and Indra are jointly solicited for help: "O ye gods, we have traveled and lost our way and come to a region where cattle do not pasture. The extensive region gives shelter to Dasyus only. O Brihaspati, lead us in our search for cattle. O Indra, show the way to your worshippers who have lost their way."

The pastoral Aryans loved their freedom and had a poetic appreciation of nature. They were not at first inclined to build cities and showed an aristocratic contempt for trade, preferring to live in fortified camps or the villages they cleared for themselves in the great forest then extending over vast areas of India. They chose as an auspicious site a place where good water was available. Then the village was laid out usually in the form of a



Symbolic figure called Nandyavarta, means "The Abode of Bliss" or Happiness.

rectangle divided into four equal quarters by principal streets running east and west and north and south, leading to four gates or watchtowers, facing the four directions. The houses were built of mud and wattle, or of bamboo and wood. The village was protected from wild animals and marauders by a fence consisting of horizontal bamboos inserted in upright posts. At the inter-

section of the main streets an open platform was constructed, shaded by a thatched roof or a tree, where the village council of five elders, which came to be known as the *panchayat*, met. As villages grew into larger centers, a council house replaced the simple village platform, and an assembly, or *sangha*, took the place of the council of five. Around the entire village, inside the fence or wall, was a broad pathway for processions. A common grazing ground was set aside, and the village fields radiated in narrow strips from the village center.

Such was the general pattern of the Vedic Aryan village as gathered from scattered allusions in the Vedic literature, from the earliest surviving sculptured reliefs, and from the classical Sanskrit works on town planning, which carefully preserve the old traditions. The pattern of the Vedic Aryan village was later reproduced in the royal cities of the epic age and may still be seen in the great Indian temple cities of early medieval times.

The general picture of the pastoral and agricultural life of the early Indo-Aryan community has an appealing charm. For everyone there was a special duty to perform. The small boys took the cattle out daily to graze on the edge of the forest land, and brought them back in the evening to the village, where they could be sheltered from wild animals, just as the Indian village boys still tend the pearl-gray cows and smooth-skinned water buffaloes. How vivid and understandable is the Indian name for sunset, "hour of cow-dust." The Vedic maiden's duty can be guessed from her name of *duhitri*, which has the same root as daughter, for *dugdha*, from which it derives, means "milk," and the daughter was the little milkmaid of the family. She plaited mats and wove cloth from sheep's wool. She danced and she collected the sacred *kusa* grass to spread on the ground for sacrifices. She helped to make the sacred *soma* juice. As water was added to the crushed plants, she stirred the juice with her fingers, pressing it through a woollen strainer into a sacred vessel.

The men, when they were not fighting, were busy in many

ways, but principally in tending the fields, with the help of their horses and oxen. They sowed barley and wheat and carried on irrigation. At harvesting time they cut the grain with sickles and transported it on carts. They were tenderly considerate of their animals, and ever grateful to the gods of field and sky through whose bounty they prospered.

The Vedic field songs, of which there are many, ring with a lusty joy of living. "We will conquer this field with the Lord of the Field. May he nourish our cattle and our horses, may he bless us thereby. O Lord of the Field, bestow on us sweet and pure and copious rain, even as cows give us milk. May the Lords of the Water bless us. May the plants be sweet unto us. May the skies and rains and the firmament be full of sweetness. May the Lord of the Field be gracious to us. We will follow him, uninjured by enemies. Let the oxen work merrily, let the men work merrily, let the plow move on merrily, fasten the traces merrily, ply the goad merrily. O Suna and Sira, accept this hymn. Moisten this earth with the rain you have created in the sky. O fortunate furrow, proceed onwards. We pray unto thee, do thou bestow on us wealth and abundant crops."

Another joyous outburst has the same delightful freshness of the Aryan morning. "Fasten the plows, spread out the yoke, and sow the seeds on this field which has been prepared. Let the corn grow with our hymns. Let the scythes fall on the fields near by, where the corn is ripe. The plows have been fastened, the laborers have spread the yokes, wise men are uttering prayers to the gods. Prepare troughs for the drinking of the animals. Fasten the leather string, and let us take out water from this deep and goodly well that never dries up. The troughs have been prepared for the animals. The leather string shines in the deep and goodly well that never dries up, and the water comes up easily. Take out water from the well. Refresh the horses. Take up the corn stacked in the field, and make a cart that can convey it easily."

The Vedic Aryans considered themselves as free men, and

originally they were all of equal status. They could be soldiers, herdsmen or farmers, as occasion required, and every Aryan father in his own household daily performed rites of worship and hymn chanting to the devas. It was these rites of worship which mainly distinguished the Aryans from the "non-sacrificing" aboriginals or others who followed strange religious practices looked upon as abhorrent and disgusting. But as time went on, the circumstances of a more settled life introduced a profound change within the Aryan social system.

Gradually the original five tribes of the Indo-Aryans spread out and multiplied. For purposes of mutual protection, tribal villages combined themselves into larger units under the rule of a chosen *raja*, or king, accepted by the people of the tribe as protector and leader in battle. As one tribe or another grew in power, grazing lands tended to overlap, and often the men of one tribe came into conflict with those of another. An account of the great battle on the Ravi, in which Sudas, king of the Bharatas, defeated an alliance of Ten Kings of whom five were Aryan, comes down from the dim period of the *Rig-veda*. Both sides had their family priests. On the side of Sudas and the Bharatas was Vasistha, on the side of the Ten Kings, Visvamitra.

The fighting between Aryan and Aryan was according to a strict code of honor, but as it developed on an ever-increasing scale, it necessitated the maintaining of large forces of trained fighting men. Ultimately, the welfare of the whole community depended on good crops, and so those who showed themselves to be the best farmers were permanently excused from fighting and permitted to remain behind in the villages to look after the fields. The king, who always led his army in person, had to spend much of his time in camp, and naturally this prevented him from attending in strict detail to religious ritual. A royal chaplain, or priest, was therefore appointed to attend to religious observances on behalf of the king, and the priest also took charge of the big sacrifices which were performed on stated occasions.

Thus a special class known as Brahmins, or "prayer men," be-

gan to emerge in Aryan society. They were the specialists in all religious affairs, particularly in matters of ritual. They measured and laid out the sacred enclosures for sacrifices, consisting of both animals and milk, grain or cakes. Horses, oxen, sheep and goats were all slaughtered, and there was as yet no prohibition against cow-killing. The Brahmins also built the fire altars, arranged the copper utensils, collected the fuel and chanted the appropriate hymns. Famous Brahmin families, or schools, of priests came into existence. Seven books of the *Rig-veda* represent collections of hymns mainly associated with such priestly families. The Kshatriyas, or warriors, from among whom the king himself was chosen, also acquired a separate professional standing in the expanding community. Below the priests and the military class came the commoners, Vaisyas, consisting of herdsmen, farmers and superior craftsmen, such as goldsmiths, armorers, metalworkers and carpenters. They still remained free and relinquished none of their old privileges as self-respecting Aryans, entitled to a full say in all the affairs of the community. These three groups called themselves "twice-born," because, according to the Aryan custom, the boys at a certain age underwent a special initiation ceremony, marked by the putting on of a sacred belt or cord, as they began their study of the sacred scriptures, knowledge of which constituted a second, or spiritual, birth.

During the period of Aryan expansion in the north, the dark-skinned earlier inhabitants of the land were by no means exterminated, in spite of Indra's mighty thunderbolt. Beyond the Vindhya, in the Deccan and southern India, the non-Aryans continued to follow their own pursuits. Some of the more primitive inhabitants fled away to remote hills and forests. But great numbers, of course, were conquered by the Aryans and pressed into service to perform the less inviting tasks of life, as laborers, menials or petty craftsmen. With the passage of time, the Sudras, as they were now called, adopted many of the customs and beliefs of their Aryan overlords, and though the Aryans did their

best to prevent intermarriage, an inevitable mingling of races began to take place. In the end, these conquered Indians acquired a recognized place in the economic and social life of the Aryan community. They remained on a lower social level than the free Aryans, however. They were excluded from the rite of Vedic initiation, and hence were only "once-born" from the Aryan point of view.

Slowly, too, some of the primitive wild folk who had fled away in terror before the Aryan chariots and their neighing steeds came creeping back. They hung on the outskirts of the mixed Aryan and Sudra villages and timidly offered for barter their humble wicker baskets, their clay pottery or their jungle produce. They even began to perform the most degraded of the village services, such as scavenging, skinning the dead cattle or burning the bodies of the dead, but they remained entirely beyond the pale of Aryan society. Their clustered huts were always somewhere outside the Aryan type of village. The fifty or sixty million Indians, now most of them professing the Hindu faith, who are today classed as "depressed" or "untouchable," represent descendants from this ostracized fifth group of the original inhabitants. The Aryan acceptance of a society divided on a double basis of color and labor, flexible at first, tended to become more and more rigid as time went on, and eventually it developed into the well-known Hindu caste system, in which, according to the orthodox tradition, a person is born, is married and dies in one particular community, without ever having the opportunity to leave it.

To begin with, trade was apparently distasteful to the freedom-loving and poetic Aryan temperament, and business was probably left largely in the hands of capable non-Aryans. Barter, however, or some form of selling and buying, was inescapable, and the *Rig-veda* tells us not only that values were normally measured in terms of cows or gold, but that it was necessary to observe the sound principle of standing by one's contract. "One sells a large quantity for a small price, and then he goes to the

purchaser and denies the sale and asks for a higher price. But he cannot exceed the price once fixed, on the plea that he had given a large quantity. Whether the price was adequate or inadequate, the price fixed at the time of the sale must hold good."

Larger business enterprises naturally necessitated journeys to distant places. Highways linked the villages with the larger towns, and along these merchants traveled in caravans. They even made journeys by sea. The *Rig-veda* has several references to ships. Varuna, the Sky-Ocean-god, is said to know the paths of the sea over which ships go, just as he knows the paths of the birds in the sky. Something like a naval expedition is described in one hymn, in which the son of a certain king who had gone to fight the king's enemies in distant islands suffers shipwreck in the ocean, "where there is no support, no rest, for the foot or the hand." He is ultimately rescued, says the author of the hymn, by the heavenly Asvins, who appear suddenly with a "hundred-oared galley." Merchants desiring to gain wealth are said to pray to the sea before departing on their hazardous enterprises.

In periods of leisure between war and work, the Vedic Aryans amused themselves in various ways. They loved singing, poetry and music, and they had drums, stringed instruments and flutes. Chariot races and archery contests were a source of keen delight. They hunted with the bow and arrow, captured lions and birds in snares, antelopes in pits, and boars with the aid of hunting dogs. They were passionately addicted to the use of intoxicating liquor, of which they had two kinds. The sacred soma, offered in sacrifices, was made from a mysterious plant which cannot now be identified, and *sura* was made from fermented barley. We are told that to the soma drinker the "five tribes" seemed as nothing. One half of him was greater than both the worlds! His greatness, indeed, reached beyond the heavens and the earth. Boastfully he sang, "Shall I carry this earth hither and thither, shall I shatter this earth here or there?"

Gambling, too, exercised a dangerous fascination over the Indo-Aryans of Vedic times. A vivid description of the plight of

a ruined gambler appears in a Rig-vedic hymn to Savitar, the Sun-god. "The tumbling, exciting dice delight me as they roll on the board. My wife never quarreled with me, nor irritated me. She was kind to me and my friends. But I, for the sake of the hazardous dice, have spurned my devoted spouse. My mother-in-law detests me, my wife rejects me; the gambler finds no comforter. Nor can I see what a gambler is good for, any more than a valuable horse worn out with age." The hymn ends with an exhortation from Savitar, and a doubtful hope that the gambler will reform himself: "Let the dice alone; tend thy farm; rejoice in thy goods and be content. Here, gamester, are thy cattle, here thy wife. This word spake to me the adorable Savitar. Make peace then, and take pity on me, nor entice me any longer with thy dire witchery, O dice."

In the domestic realm, the picture of Aryan life gained from the *Rig-veda* is usually a happy one. The father, or rather the oldest male member, was the head of the family. This patriarchal system, particularly characteristic of Aryan society, is the exact opposite of the matriarchal system which was observed among the ancient Dravidians and which still prevails in certain areas in south India like Malabar, where descent is counted from the mother's or sister's side. Though the Aryan man might occasionally take more than one wife, monogamy appears to have been the general rule and the Aryan mother certainly held a high and honorable position in the family. The joint happiness of the married couple is often sung. One hymn contains this passage: "O gods, the married couple who together intend to present to you libations and offerings without ceasing, who together come on the grass to place the sacred food and to prepare an abundant repast for you, who implore your goodwill, who honor you with praises and shower presents upon you — this couple, surrounded by little children and growing sons and daughters, pass a happy life and are clothed in raiment shining with gold."

Sons, indeed, were welcomed by the Indo-Aryans as future warriors, but daughters, who would become the mothers of war-

riors, were affectionately cherished in the Vedic home. They were never looked upon as mere chattels. Considerable freedom of choice in marriage was allowed to young people, and there was no such practice as child marriage. Nor was there any bride price. On the contrary, the Aryan maiden was given away with an ample dowry, consisting of gold, cows, chariots and horses.

The Vedic marriage ritual echoes a feeling of solemn dignity. The bridegroom recites: "I take thy hand as pledge for our happiness; I wish thee to become my wife and grow old with me. May the Head of Creation grant us a numerous race. Enter under happy auspices the conjugal home. May there be happiness in our house for both bipeds and quadrupeds. Come, O desired of the gods, beautiful one with a tender heart, with the charming look, good towards your husband, kind towards animals, destined to bring forth heroes. May there be happiness in our house for both bipeds and quadrupeds." At the conclusion of the ceremony, when the bridal pair together circle the sacred fire, the blessings of Indra are called down upon the young wife by the family priest: "O generous Indra, make her fortunate. May she have a beautiful family. May she give her husband ten children. May he himself be like an eleventh. Reign with thy father-in-law, reign with thy mother-in-law, reign with the sisters of thy husband, reign with their brothers."

As wife and mother, the woman of Rig-vedic days was looked upon as a distributor of blessings. Her responsibilities were the care of the house, the preparation of the food, the provision of clothing for her family, the kindly management of the household servants, concern for the welfare of domestic animals, and the upbringing of the children. Although she did not undergo any special ceremony of religious initiation, she received instruction from the family priest, and her presence was required in all the religious sacrifices and rites observed in the household. If her husband died before she did, and she had no children, she could, if she wished, marry again. In Vedic times, no such practice existed as *sati*, a widow burning herself on her husband's

funeral pyre. A beautiful funeral hymn of the *Rig-veda* addresses the bereaved wife thus: "Rise up, woman, thou art lying by one whose life is gone; come to the world of the living, away from thy husband."

But the Vedic hymns, it must be remembered, were not sung merely to tell unborn generations how the Indo-Aryans lived as human beings in northern India four to five thousand years ago. They were composed with awe and love for the mysterious forces which the minds and hearts of the ancient poets and seers told them lay behind every aspect of the visible world of earth, sky and sea, as well as behind all those other invisible worlds whose presence they dimly felt. These forces seemed to them like gods and goddesses, friendly to worshippers and ever ready to give help, if only they were approached with prayers and proper rites. The steadfast mountains, the rushing rivers, rain and the blue-black storm clouds, wind and the flashing lightning, the life-giving sun, the rhythmic moon, the bright fire, dawn and twilight, the fertile earth, the invigorating soma drink — all inspired songs of praise, and to each were rendered tribute of homage and devotion.

The objectives of the rituals through which the deities were invoked, were for the most part, however, quite practical and material. Success in battle, the safe outcome of a journey, long life, wealth in progeny and cows — such were the ends for which the Vedic Aryans generally prayed or made sacrifices. But sometimes, too, the request was for spiritual knowledge. One of the best-known of the *Rig-vedic* hymns is a very short one, the "Gayatri," addressed to Savitar, the sun. This is still repeated as a morning prayer by countless orthodox Brahmins all over India. It has been translated in many ways, of which the following is one: "We meditate on that effulgent light of Savitar. May he enlighten our understanding."

The Vedic religion deified the powers of nature, but the Indo-Aryans had no temples and no images to begin with, until at last somebody thought of making an image of Indra to carry

into battle. Some gods were described as moving through space, riding on chariots drawn by swift tawny steeds or fleet deer and even descending to earth at times and mingling with men. Others remained forever formless and shadowy. But all, however great and powerful, were held to be subject to an impersonal law, itself greater than the personal will of any deity. Each god is hymned for the moment as all-powerful, all-knowing, omnipresent, creator and sustainer of the universe, but the very same qualities and attributes are bestowed upon the others also, and now and then the idea of an all-embracing unity suddenly flashes forth in challenging words. "They call It Indra, Mitra, Varuna: That which exists is One, though the wise call It by many names," is a verse from the first book of the *Rig-veda*.

The ancient seers could not accept the idea that "something" could ever be created out of "nothing." So the visible universe was thought to have unfolded from a finer invisible form, to which it is destined again to go back, coming out and going back in an endless procession of revolving cycles. Evolution represents the unfolding process of a particular cycle; dissolution, its end. "The sun and the moon the Lord created like the suns and moons of the previous cycles." There have been countless universes before the present one, and there will be countless universes yet to come.

Among Vedic deities, Agni, god of Fire, is the chief presiding deity of earth. At the same time, he acts as messenger between men and gods. He is a great favorite with the Vedic Aryans, and some two hundred hymns in the *Rig-veda* are dedicated to him alone. He lives in all fire, but especially in the sacred fire of the Vedic ritual, and he survives for us yet in such a common word as *ignite*. Earth, Prithivi, is a goddess and the rivers are goddesses. Prajapati, lord of creatures, Yama, who rules over the realm of the blessed dead, and Soma, whose cup ceaselessly fills and empties with the waxing and waning moon, are important deities of the Vedic period. To Soma the whole ninth book of the *Rig-veda* has been dedicated.

The Sun is, of course, the all-powerful lord of the luminous region, and his one-wheeled chariot rolls onward across the sky, drawn by seven horses. But the sun has many aspects, and the Sun-god has at least five names, Savitar, Vivasrat, Surya, Mitra and Vishnu. Vishnu, the lord of morning, noon and evening, occupies a minor place in the Vedic pantheon but becomes one of the chief gods of later Hinduism. Associated with the Sun is Ushas, the Dawn, who evokes specially tender and poetic feelings. The Asvins, who are the morning and evening stars, or perhaps the two half-lights between day and night, usually act as physicians to the rest of the gods.

The wide Sky, in its endless moods, particularly appealed to the Vedic Aryans, who found many sky deities to worship. The Sky-father, Dyaus-pitar, was a beneficent deity, who became Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Tiu to the Icelandic people, and in English is still remembered in the word Tuesday. The Storm-god Rudra, with his terrifying sons, the Maruts, spreading havoc behind him, was the "wild boar of the sky." He later became identified with Shiva, dividing the honors of popular worship with Vishnu. Parjanya, the Rain-cloud, and Vayu, the Wind-god, were also sky deities.

Most popular of all, however, was Indra, the Rain-god, lord of the firmament and king of all the gods. Two hundred and fifty hymns of the *Rig-veda* sing his glory. Indra became the national War-god of the Vedic Aryans, and is credited with many exploits. One of his greatest feats was the slaying of Vritra, a dragon who long withheld the waters of earth in a cave. Indra at last slew the demon with his thunderbolt, and the pent-up waters once again flowed in torrents over the parched land, rushing towards the sea "as cows run eagerly towards their calves." Indra is the most human of all the Vedic gods. He has a body, wears gold armor, wields the thunderbolt as a weapon, presides over the court of the gods. He is able to consume the flesh of three hundred buffaloes and quaff three lakes of soma juice at one time!



Another highly important deity is Varuna, god of the wide expanse of both Sky and Ocean. The same deity among the Iranians rose to be the supreme god, worshipped under the name of Ahura Mazda. Varuna is so powerful that the Vedic Aryans are a little afraid of him, and when they pray to him they remember their sins and ask his forgiveness. "O Varuna, with an anxious heart I ask thee about my sins. I have gone to learned men to make inquiry; the sages have all said to me, 'Varuna is displeased with thee.' O Varuna, what have I done? Declare it to me, so that I may quickly bend in adoration and come unto thee. O Varuna, all this sin is not wilfully committed by us. Error or wine, anger or dice, or even thoughtlessness, has begotten sin. We are ignorant. May the Aryan god bestow on us knowledge." Varuna is said to see all, to know the innermost thought, to perceive what two men plot in secret. Varuna numbers the winkings of each mortal eye. He sends his thousand spies from heaven, and with all their countless eyes they survey the world. As a player wields dice, so does Varuna wield the universe.

The tenth book of the *Rig-veda* contains many hymns which are abstract and philosophic. They clearly foreshadow the religious thought of the next period of Indian history. These hymns express the solemn searchings of the soul and seek answers to profound questions about the origin and nature of the universe, the mysteries of life and death, the relation of human beings to the Eternal.

One hymn speaks of the "golden germ," called *Hiranyagarbha*, as the source of all life: "Before the universe became manifest, there was manifest Hiranyagarbha. He being manifest became the lord of the manifested universe. He held within himself the invisible world, the sky and this earth. Unto him we offer our sacrifice. He who is the purifier of our hearts, he who is the giver of strength, whose command all beings together with the gods obey, whose shadow is immortality as well as mortality, unto him we offer our sacrifice."

In another hymn, the Universal Being is named Purusha, and an imaginative attempt is made to describe what must ever be beyond description. To this hymn may be traced the conception of the many-armed, many-eyed gods represented in Hindu art. "The Universal Being has infinite heads, unnumbered eyes and unnumbered feet. Enveloping the universe on every side, He exists, transcending it. All this is He — what has been, and what shall be. He is the lord of immortality. The whole series of universes expresses His glory and power. All beings of the universe form, as it were, a fraction of His being. But the rest of His being is self-luminous and unchangeable."

Another famous hymn of the *Rig-veda* has sometimes been named the Hymn of Creation. In this hymn, the universal god is called simply "That One." It is neither male nor female, but an impersonal eternal principle.

"Then there was neither existence nor non-existence; the world was not, nor the sky, nor anything beyond. Were there any of the subtle elements which by their appearance cover the reality behind? Where would they exist? And for whose experience? Was there the deep fathomless abyss of water?"

"Then there was neither death nor deathlessness. Nor was there the knowledge of the distinction between night and day. That One, the source of light, existed without the motion of life. It existed, united as one with Its Power. Other than It, there was nothing.

"In the beginning there existed gloom hidden in gloom. This universe then remained undistinguished from its cause.

"Who in reality knows, and who can truly say, how this creation came into existence, and from what cause? Even the devas were born after the creation came into existence. Hence who can know the cause of this universe?"

"The source from which the universe sprang, That One alone can sustain it, none else. That One, the lord of the universe, dwelling in Its own being, undefiled as the sky above, alone knows the truth of Its own creation, none else."

## CHAPTER IV

### *A Priceless Heritage*

ALMOST NOTHING tangible remains, except the deep-rooted influences of Indo-Aryan culture itself, to prove the important fact of the expansion and integration of the Indo-Aryan tribes between 2000 and 500 B.C. after they had ceased their wanderings in the "land of the seven rivers." A few stone *yupa*-posts, once used in sacrificial Vedic rites, have been identified, but no contemporary Aryan monuments, no historical records like the early chronicles of China, have survived. In spite of this, a vast archaic literature has been handed down, which faithfully preserves the ideas and ideals of those far-off times. It establishes the wonderful continuity and depth of Indian civilization. The only limitation is that the authors of the Vedic literature were almost invariably Brahmins or high-caste Aryans, and it did not occur to them to try to present any view of life except their own. No voice echoes down the corridors of time, to speak for non-Aryan India in the same ancient period.

With the end of the creative period of hymn making, a new geographical background and a more advanced social and intellectual life are immediately reflected in the literary materials. The Indus land, so majestically praised in the early hymns, scarcely even interests the Indo-Aryans any more. Sometimes it is contemptuously classed with Anga and Vanga (eastern Bihar and distant Bengal) as outlying territory where proper Aryan rites are not performed. The Indo-Aryans are now seen to have settled down permanently in the Ganges Valley. Aryavarta, as they call the region of the upper Jumna and Ganges, in which

the present city of Delhi lies, is politically divided into two great kingdoms belonging to the Kurus and Panchalas, heirs of the old-time Bharatas. Farther east, in the "middle country" — Madhyadesa — is the powerful kingdom of Kosala. Its capital is Ayodhya, identical with the well-known town in the United Provinces which still bears the same name. Kasi, or Benares, Videha and Magadha, corresponding to northern and southern Bihar, are also important Aryan kingdoms, and there are many others, especially the Yadava kingdom, with the capital at Mathura. The great *rishi* Agastya has already passed south of the Vindhyas, the first missionary to bear the torch of Aryan culture and religion to the non-Aryan peoples of southern India.

The Indo-Aryan clans have given up their nomad life and no longer go in search of other people's cattle and pasture lands. They have developed a stable village, city and forest life, but forest life has ceased to mean only that of a primitive hunter. It now means to the Aryan community a life of meditation and the practice of religious austerities in a forest hermitage, or *asrama*. Many of the forest hermitages are in process of being turned into schools and universities. But village life still remains simple. The villages are self-governing and self-contained. Cultivation of the land and care of the herds are their chief concern, and apart from agriculture all the village needs are met by local craftsmen. City life, on the contrary, is tending to become complex, and the royal cities in particular show a high degree of culture, naturally centering in the raja's court. Economic specialization is spurring on the development of castes which have begun to organize their own brotherhood governments. Various trades and commercial professions have also begun to organize themselves into guilds.

With the rise of the new Aryan kingdoms, the power of the king has greatly increased, but it is by no means autocratic. It rests on the approval of the people, expressed through an assembly of respectable citizens and state officials. The king, who must be a Kshatriya by birth, is surrounded with councilors

representing all classes of the citizens, and he is expected to follow their advice on matters of state policy. In return for the protection he gives his subjects, he is allowed to maintain his rule by collecting a tax on the produce of the land, ordinarily not to exceed one sixth of the crop. If the crop is poor, the king gets less. Thus the burden of the tax is adjusted to the capacity of the people to pay. The king also administers justice, but he must follow the law, not his own whims. If the king does not perform his kingly duties properly, he can be deposed and driven into exile. There is no such idea as "divine right of kings."

Like the royal power, the power of the priestly class has also become greatly augmented. The Brahmin is now not only the recognized priest of Aryan society, but also its teacher and law-maker. Very wisely, he does not attempt to share worldly power with the king or wealth with the trading classes. He vows himself to poverty, and sets himself the ideal of being content with his religious and intellectual superiority. The restrictions thus voluntarily self-imposed win him the profound respect of society as a whole. He lives on the gifts he receives. In contrast to his own austere regulated life, however, the religious sacrifices and ceremonies over which he presides, both in private and in public, are constantly elaborated, especially those performed on behalf of the king. The great Coronation Ceremony (Rajasuya) is exceeded in splendor only by the Horse Sacrifice (Asvamedha) prescribed for a king who succeeds in making himself king over kings, in other words, a universal monarch. Some of these sacrifices take a full year or more to complete. When they are finished, the royal treasury is practically empty.

The Brahmins and rishis, or great seers, had by this time established their claim to be custodians of the sacred Vedas. The Vedas, described as "eternal, without beginning or end," are looked upon as the expression of eternal truths and principles, directly perceived by the rishis of old and capable of being experienced by all who train themselves to a spiritual awakening. They depend on no one personality for their sacred character.

Tradition says that to begin with there was only one Veda, but at some unknown period in the remote past the great sage Vyasa rearranged this original Veda into four parts, for greater convenience. When the Vedas are first heard of, an orderly rearrangement has already been made, and the Four Vedas have come into existence. They are considered so sacred that no further change is tolerated. Volumes of commentaries and explanations can be written, but not a word can be added or taken away from the Vedas themselves. Whole classes of Vedic literature gradually acquired the same inviolability. Undoubtedly the Vedas have suffered less corruption than the ancient scriptures of any other people, and this is what gives to early Vedic literature its uniqueness of unquestioned authenticity.

The Four Vedas are the Rig, Sama, Yajur and Arthava Vedas. The *Rig-veda*, in the most archaic type of Sanskrit, is the repository of the very earliest hymns which were recited at Vedic sacrifices. The *Sama-veda* is a collection of verses from many of the same hymns, with some later ones also included, which were specifically intended to be sung. The *Yajur-veda* is a book of prayers and mystical formulae, called *mantra* in Sanskrit, and the *Arthava-veda* contains mostly spells, incantations and medical recipes, and is really a very ancient book on magic, enshrining some of the most primitive traditions of the Indo-Aryan people.

Around the Vedas there soon grew up various supplementary works. Each Veda had various Brahmanas, or explanatory prose manuals, attached to it, for the guidance of officiating priests of different schools. The Brahmanas, in turn, gave rise to the Aranyakas, or forest books, which interpreted the Vedic rituals symbolically instead of literally, for the benefit of those who had renounced worldly life and retired to the forest hermitages to practise austerities. As a last chapter to the forest books came the wonderful *Upanishads*, also called the *Vedanta*, or end portion of the Vedas. There are eleven early *Upanishads*, going back to

The many stories scattered through the *Upanishads* all stress the same theme, this great truth of Brahman, which has first to be heard, then to be meditated upon and finally to be realized within one's own self. But this truth can become known by different ways to different persons, by intuition, by reasoning, by direct teaching, and there are stories to illustrate all methods.

In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* is the imperishable story of Satyakama Jabala. One day he addressed his mother, saying, "I wish to become a *Brahmacharin*, a student, Mother. Of what family am I?" His mother replied, "I do not know, my child. In my youth, when I had to move about much as a servant, I conceived thee. I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name, thou art Satyakama. Say thou art Satyakama Jabala." So the boy went straight to the teacher and, unashamed, spoke as his mother had instructed him. "No one but the son of a Brahmin would speak such damaging truth against himself," replied the teacher. "Go and fetch fuel, friend. I shall initiate you. You have not swerved from the truth." The teacher initiated him, and then ordered him to take four hundred lean and weak cows to the forest to tend. Satyakama understood the ideal of service. As he drove the cows to the forest, he said to himself, "I shall not return unless I bring back a thousand cows." When the cows had at last multiplied into a thousand, Satyakama prepared to return to his teacher's house. At this moment, a strange thing happened. The bull of the herd suddenly spoke to him, and told him of the splendor of Brahman. He drove the cows on, penned them, lighted a fire and sat down to meditate. Then the fire spoke to him and told him of the infinity of Brahman. Once more he drove the cows on, penned them at evening, lighted a fire and sat down to meditate. This time it was a bird flying past who spoke to him of the light of Brahman. On the following day, yet another bird spoke to him, telling him how Brahman was to be perceived within the self. When Satyakama came back to the house, the teacher, seeing him from afar, exclaimed,

"Friend, you shine like one who knows Brahman! Who, then, has taught you?" Satyakama replied, "Not men." For through meditation, in the solitude of nature, spiritual knowledge had awakened within him, and all things testified to its truth. After that, Satyakama Jabala himself became a famous teacher, imparting knowledge of Brahman to those ready to receive it. "If you were to tell this to a dry stick, branches would grow, and leaves spring from it," he said.

In the same *Upanishad* is the story of Svetaketu. A father said to his son, "Svetaketu, go to school; for there is none belonging to our race, darling, who, not having studied, is, as it were, a Brahmin by birth only." Svetaketu, twelve years old, went off to school and returned at twenty-four, convinced that he knew all about the Vedas. His father asked him if he knew that "by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known," and the son had to confess ignorance. The father then ordered him to fetch the fruit of a certain tree, examine the infinitesimal seeds and break one open. "What do you see there?" he asked. "Not anything, sir." "My son, that subtle essence, which you do not perceive there, in it all that exists has its being. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art That." Next the father gave him salt to place in water overnight. In the morning he asked for the salt. It was not to be found. "Taste from the surface of the water," he ordered. "How is it?" "It is salt." "Taste from the middle. How is it?" "It is salt." "Taste from the bottom. How is it?" "It is salt." "Throw it away." But the salt could not be thrown away, apart from the water. Exactly so, the father explained, does the eternal essence of Brahman pervade the body, and in it all that exists has its being. "It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art That."

In the *Katha Upanishad* is the story of Nachiketas, one of the best-known and best-loved. Nachiketas was a Brahmin lad who was taught by Yama, lord of death. The father of Nachiketas performed a great sacrifice, promising to give away in charity

all his possessions. But what he gave away were his old barren cows and other useless things. Nachiketas, turning to his father, asked, "To whom wilt thou give me?" Angrily came the answer. "I shall give thee unto death." The words, once uttered, could not be unsaid, and Nachiketas set out for the abode of Death. Yama happened to be away, however, and for three days and nights Nachiketas waited, without receiving the hospitality due to a Brahmin. Upon his return, Yama offered three boons as amends. Nachiketas first asked for his father's forgiveness. Second, he asked instruction in the great fire sacrifice, performance of which was supposed to lead to the heavenly world. Finally he asked, "There is that doubt when a man is dead, some saying, he is, others, he is not. This I should like to know, taught by thee."

Yama in vain tried to divert him. "Choose sons and grandsons who shall live a hundred years, herds of cattle, elephants, gold and horses. Choose the wide abode of the earth, and live thyself as many harvests as thou desirest." Nachiketas only answered: "These things last till tomorrow, O Death. Even the whole of life is short. Keep thou thy horses, keep dance and song for thyself. No man can be made happy by wealth. Shall we possess wealth, when we see thee? Shall we live, as long as thou rulest? Only that boon which I have chosen is to be chosen by me."

Yama was well pleased. Nachiketas had passed the test. "The good is one thing, the pleasant another," he said. "It is well with him who chooses the good; he who chooses the pleasant misses his end." And he then proceeded to tell the boy about the nature of Brahman — the unborn, eternal, everlasting. Thus did Nachiketas join the wise who, knowing the Self as unchanging among changing things, do not grieve any more.

Towards the end of the Vedic period, a new idea began to grow up, namely that life, at least for a Brahmin, should be divided into four stages. The first is described as *Brahmacharya*, or student discipleship. It is followed by the *Grihastha* stage, in which, as a householder, a man is expected to fulfill all his duties towards

gods, ancestors, Brahmins, society and his own family. When a man sees his children's children, the time has then arrived for him to renounce worldly affairs and become a *Vana-prastha*, or forest dweller. Accompanied by his wife, should she wish to join him, he retires to some quiet hermitage far removed from the distractions of town or city, there to live a life of austerity and meditation. Finally, severing the ties even of the hermitage, he should give up all attachments, become a wandering *Sannyasin*, or a renouncer, and strive for the ultimate knowledge of God alone. Even if this ideal division of a life's span was not always practicable, every Aryan boy was expected to go to a Brahmin teacher and receive a Vedic education during the first period of his life.

The schoolgoing ceremony of the Upanayana, normally performed for a Brahmin boy at eight, for a Kshatriya, at eleven, and for a Vaisya, at twelve, meant admission into the sacred inheritance of the race. This ceremony for boys, now known as the sacred thread ceremony, is still performed in every orthodox high-caste Hindu family. Simple dignity attended the symbolic rite of initiation. After a ceremonial bath, the boy was given new garments, a deerskin to sit on, and a triple-plaited grass girdle. He was then formally presented to Agni, the Fire-god, who was requested to endow the young scholar with his own brilliance and vigor. Standing on a stone, the boy was enjoined to be firm as a rock in the diligent pursuit of knowledge. Finally, he was given a staff, as a symbol that he was about to start on a long journey, which, if untiringly pursued, would lead him to the wonderful realm of knowledge. He then left home and took up his residence in the Brahmin teacher's house on the edge of the forest, where he was henceforth treated like a son both by the teacher and his wife. With fifteen or twenty schoolfellows, he would normally spend twelve years at his teacher's house, the minimum deemed necessary for mastering a single Veda. If he wanted to learn all the Four Vedas, he might spend a lifetime. There were no fixed school fees, but at the end of the course he

would present a "teacher's fee," in accordance with the means and position of his family.

During his school life, a student was expected to wait on his teacher and beg food for his master's family and himself. He had to rise regularly at half past four in the morning, say his prayers, gather wood in the forest to keep alight the sacred Vedic fire, fetch water for his teacher's bath and his own, prepare toothsticks cut from some medicinal tree, and tend the cattle. Rich and poor students alike went out on the daily begging round for food, which had to be accepted from all who offered it, without distinction of caste. Thus the young students were taught humility and a spirit of equality. Even a king's son followed the same routine. The students became aware of their dependence on society for help in getting their education, and society was made to assume a direct responsibility for seeing that the younger generation got its education. Since character-building was considered an essential part of education, a student was taught to shun anger, laziness, jealousy, pride, untruthfulness and cruelty. He was not expected to indulge in luxuries, such as perfume, flower garlands, meat and spiced food. Except for long journeys, he did not put on shoes or carry an umbrella. He was disciplined to observe a life of strict chastity, and to pay reverence, respect and implicit obedience to his teacher.

The method of teaching was oral, and boys had first to learn their alphabet and elementary arithmetic. *Ganita*, calculation, was sometimes called "dust-work," because the figures were written with the forefinger in the dust or on a board spread with sand, and were rubbed out as the calculation proceeded. The earliest form of writing used by the Indo-Aryans was *Brahmi*, from which all the alphabets of all the purely Indian languages, including the Dravidian languages of the south, were subsequently derived. The script was invented in India by the Brahmins, probably about 1000 B.C. Within the next six centuries, it came into use all over India, and thus became the earliest national Indian script.

Having mastered his preliminary subjects, the student was ready for his serious preoccupation with his Vedic studies. Everything had to be learned by heart, and sitting decorously on his deerskin, he would first begin to repeat after the teacher, syllable by syllable, word for word, the hymns of the *Rig-veda*, also naming the rishi, or holy seer, associated with each hymn, and explaining the meaning of every abstruse word. For already the spoken language of the Aryan people was Prakrit, allied to, but distinct from, the archaic Sanskrit of the early Vedic period. Extreme care had to be taken not only to learn the correct pronunciation of each sacred syllable, but the exact intonation assigned to it. Every syllable had long ago been carefully counted, every line of the hymns tabulated. There were exactly 153,826 words, made up of 432,000 syllables, in the 1028 hymns of the *Rig-veda*! It was believed that any mistake, even the mispronunciation of a single word, might bring disaster to the unwitting perpetrator of the mistake and to the whole community as well. This probably explains why the Vedas were forbidden to non-Aryans and persons of low caste, and why, to prevent their falling into wrong hands, they were not written down even after writing became known. In fact, it was not until the eighth or ninth century A.D. that the bold Kashmiri Brahmin Vasukra had the courage to defy tradition and reduce the Vedas to writing, fearing that otherwise they might one day be totally lost.

The Vedic student had also, of course, to wrestle with grammar, etymology and poetic meters. The science of grammar was so highly regarded that it received the title of "Veda of the Vedas." One name stands out above all others among the world's early grammarians, that of Panini, but Panini, born in Gandhara in northwest India probably around 500 B.C., gives the names of more than sixty grammarians who had already preceded him. Panini's grammatical treatise on Vedic Sanskrit is presented in eight lectures of four thousand aphorisms. In order to compress the subject into the shortest possible space, he uses a kind of shorthand, with arbitrary symbols or letters, like those of algebra,

to denote specific rules and combinations of letters. Before the rules themselves can be understood, Panini's code system has to be thoroughly mastered. It was on the foundation of Panini's grammatical analysis that, after the decay of Vedic Sanskrit, a polished literary Sanskrit (the word itself means "constructed" or "perfected") was artificially reconstructed in the classical period of Indian history, about the beginning of the fourth century A.D., and it was the discovery of Panini's grammar by Europeans in the eighteenth century which opened up the new science of language study, or comparative philology.

Another important branch of Vedic study was geometry, which originally included astronomy. The laying out of the sacrificial ground for religious ceremonies and the building of the Vedic altars were considered matters of supreme importance in ancient times. The size and shape of altar for each kind of sacrifice was minutely prescribed. An altar might require as many as 10,800 bricks, all to be laid according to a precise plan. Altar-building posed many intricate geometrical problems, whose solution was a great achievement in those early times, such as the squaring of a circle or the opposite, finding the square of a diagonal, constructing equivalent squares and rectangles, constructing triangles equivalent to squares and rectangles, and similar propositions.

Some knowledge of astronomy was likewise necessary for the proper performance of the Vedic ceremonies. Sacrifices had to be begun at fixed times of the day or year and also to end at fixed times. The movements of the heavenly bodies observed without the aid of instruments like the telescope not yet invented, but checked over long periods of time, gradually yielded the secrets of their orderly progression. In the later Vedic period, astronomy had already become a distinct science, and an astronomer was called a star observer, or calculator. In spite of the allegorical language often employed, many astronomical facts had been clearly and correctly noted. The star observer, whatever the ordinary people may have believed, had reached the conclusion

that the earth was a sphere, that it was suspended in air and was held in place by the mysterious power of the sun. The *Aitareya Brahmana* had this interesting passage: "The sun never sets nor rises. When people think to themselves the sun is setting, he only changes about after reaching the end of the day, and makes night below and day to what is on the other side. Then when people think he rises in the morning, he only shifts himself about after reaching the end of the night, and makes day below, and night to what is on the other side. In fact he never does set at all." The *Rig-veda* contains a statement to the effect that the moon shines by the borrowed light of the sun.

The year was divided according to both solar and lunar months, and the ancient names of the lunar months are still in everyday use. To adjust the difference between the two calendars, a thirteenth month was inserted every five years to bring them together. The day was divided into thirty hours of forty-eight minutes. The moon's path in the course of a month through twenty-seven or twenty-eight stellar stations was carefully recorded. The summer and winter solstices and the equinoxes were known, and six seasons were recognized: winter, spring, summer, rainy season, autumn and dewy season. The four directions were accurately measured by ascertaining the sun's altitude at noon. At least five planets had been distinguished.

In the field of mathematics, the Vedic Indians, from the very beginning, were using the decimal system of numbers, a discovery probably their own, which the whole world has since borrowed. They also made use of extremely large numbers. In the fourth century B.C. the highest number used by the Greeks was the myriad ( $10^4$ ) and the Romans never advanced beyond the mille ( $10^3$ ), but the Vedic Indians centuries before had already proceeded to the use of 10 to the fourteenth power. Time they conceived on a vast scale. With their tendency to classify everything, they presently produced the idea of *yugas*, or ages. There were supposed to be four yugas, named for the numbers on dice, Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kali, 4, 3, 2 and 1. Each age

diminished in length from the Krita onward, and lost one fourth of its virtue in comparison with the previous age. At present, the world is in the Kali Yuga, and has only one fourth of its ancient virtue left. These ages, however, are conceived as repeating themselves in cycles and combining into great ages and aeons. According to the Indian calculation, an aeon is equal to 4,320,000,000 years!

Other sciences can also be traced back to beginnings in the Vedic period. Medicine seems to have made remarkable progress at an early date. Two famous names are Charaka and Susruta, whose actual dates are unknown. Seven birch-bark manuscripts, written in Sanskrit characters of the fourth century A.D., came to light in central Asia about fifty years ago. Three of the manuscripts were medical and gave extensive quotations from both Charaka and Susruta, and the latter was quoted as a legendary authority of olden times. Charaka, according to a Chinese source, was an Indian physician in attendance at the court of Kanishka, the Kushan king who ruled in northwest India about the beginning of the Christian Era, but the famous medical treatise of Charaka was based on the teachings of Atreya, whose date has been assigned to the sixth century B.C. Previous to Atreya, *ayurveda*, "the science of life," was one of the recognized Vedic studies.

The most remarkable part of Charaka's work is his classification of remedies drawn from vegetable, mineral and animal sources. Over two thousand vegetable preparations, derived from the roots, bark, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds or sap of plants and trees, are described by Charaka, who also gives the correct time of year for gathering these materials and the method of preparing and administering them. Charaka sounds surprisingly modern. He devotes a good deal of attention to children's diseases, and discusses proper feeding and hours of sleep. He stresses the care of the teeth and the necessity for cleaning them. The universal custom among Hindus of using a medicinal stick to clean the teeth and of rinsing the mouth thoroughly after every

meal is so firmly established that it must go back to very ancient times. Diagnosis in Charaka's time was primarily based on a careful study of the pulse, and that Charaka had a good idea of blood circulation is apparent from this passage in his treatise: "From that great center [the heart] emanate the vessels carrying blood into all parts of the body — the element which nourishes the life of all animals and without which it would be extinct."

The high ethical standards which should be maintained by the medical profession are also stressed by Charaka. He says: "Not for money nor for any earthly objects should one treat his patients. In this the physician's work excels all vocations. Those who sell treatment as a merchandise neglect the true measure of gold in search of mere dust." He gives the following advice to medical students: "You should seek the happiness of all beings. You should not demand too much from your patients, even to maintain yourself. You must not touch another man's wife, even in thought, nor hanker after others' wealth. You should be sober in dress, and temperate. You must not commit a sin or be an abettor of it, and you must speak words that are gentle, clean and righteous." He adds that a doctor must never desert a patient, even if his own life be in danger, and that he should continue his study and research to the end of his life.

Susruta, whose date is sometimes placed as early as 700 B.C., was a surgeon. He calls surgery "the first and best of medical sciences." He insists that those who intend to practise it must have actual experimental knowledge of the subject. One who possesses only verbal knowledge of texts he likens to a donkey, conscious of the weight, but not of the quality, of the load he carries. At a much later date, a ban was imposed on the higher Hindu castes, forbidding them to touch a dead body. Susruta has no such compunctions and on the contrary demands that all students of surgery should perform dissections. He says: "No accurate account of any part of the body, including even its skin, can be rendered without a knowledge of anatomy; hence anyone

who wishes to acquire a thorough knowledge of anatomy must prepare a dead body, and carefully examine all its parts." For preliminary training, students were taught how to handle their instruments by operating on pumpkins or cucumbers, and they were made to practise on pieces of cloth or skin in order to learn how to sew up wounds. Major operations, as described by Susruta, included amputations, grafting, setting of fractures, removal of a foetus and operation on the bladder for removal of gallstones. The operating room, he declares, should be clean, and both before and after an operation it should be disinfected with cleansing vapors. He describes 127 different instruments used for such purposes as cutting, inoculations, puncturing, probing and sounding. Cutting instruments, Susruta maintains, should be of "bright handsome polished metal, and sharp enough to divide a hair lengthwise."

Medicine and surgery, like military science and music, were probably subjects of specialized study not directly related to the Vedas, yet somehow brought under their all-embracing wing. The six orthodox systems of philosophy, however, which took their starting point in acceptance of the authority of the Vedas, in time came to form a regular part of the advanced curriculum of study. Each system had its own distinctive text or texts, surviving in the form of *sutras*, meaning "threads." This was the name given to a series of short abbreviated aphorisms serving as memory aids to the student, after the subject had been thoroughly expounded by the teacher. These six philosophic systems are the Purva Mimamsa, stressing the significance of rituals; Vedanta, the ultimate search for the Brahman of the *Upanishads*; Yoga, meditation and certain rules of bodily and mental self-discipline as a means to supreme knowledge; Samkhya, numbers, or numerical categories of relationship between the two separate forces of nature and soul; Vaisheshika, an atomic theory of the universe; and Naya, logic and reason. All these different approaches represented links in the evolution of Indian thought, and all have left their permanent mark on the

mode of living in India. All still have their special votaries.

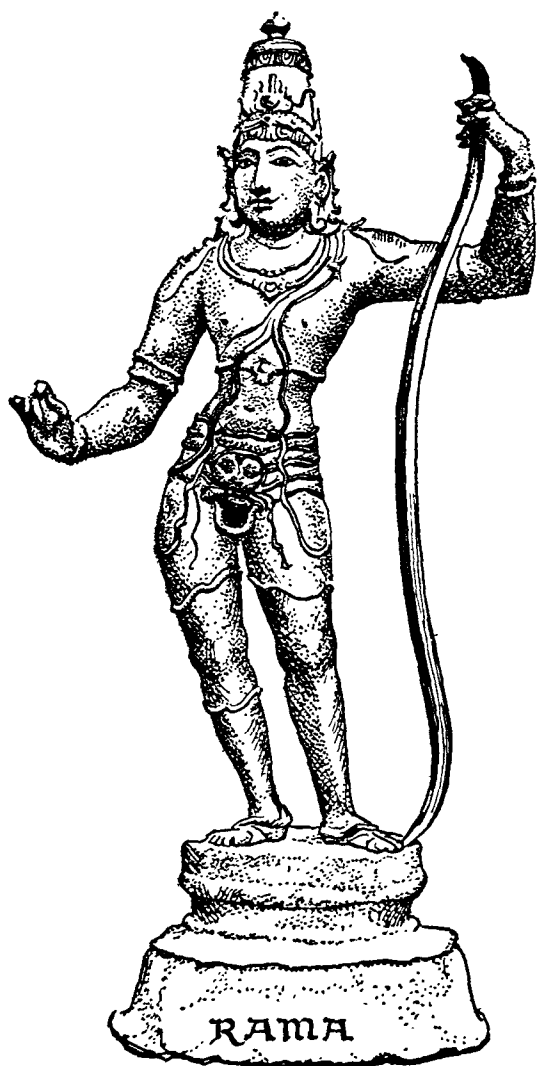
The intellectual standards of the Aryan aristocracy of ancient India were obviously of a high order, but what of ordinary people, it may well be asked. Even the Vaisyas, eligible though they were for the higher Vedic studies, could scarcely have afforded to go on with those studies up to the age of twenty-four. For simple folk, an excellent technical education was provided through the caste and guild systems. The knowledge and skill of the father were automatically made over, free of cost, to the son, who began his apprenticeship of work at his father's knee. Moreover, for the edification and entertainment of all, there were the popular *itihasas* and *puranas*, or old tales and legends, with their mingled accounts of gods, kings and sages. Eighteen puranas are known from post-Vedic times, but some of them are much older than others, and there seems to be little doubt that they actually preserve a fair measure of material handed down from the most ancient bards and ballad makers. Their special value is that they represent the Kshatriya, rather than the Brahmin, tradition. Thirteen puranas give more or less similar royal genealogies purporting to cover the earliest Aryan kingdoms, and genealogies of the famous sages, reckoned by discipleship, are also included.

Far more important, however, from the general cultural point of view, are the two great Sanskrit epics, the *Ramayana*, or "Adventures of Rama," and the *Mahabharata*, or "Story of the Great Bharata War." These, too, in their textual forms, are only about fifteen centuries old, but the core of both works goes back to a much earlier period. Long, long ago, Rama must have been a real king before he was transformed into a god, and the great fratricidal war between the descendants of Bharata must have been an actual war which probably took place about 900 B.C. In any event, as epics, what the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were to ancient Greece, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were, and still are, to India. The *Mahabharata* is further dubiously distinguished as the longest poem in the world. It is seven times as

long as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* together, and even the *Ramayana* is three times their combined length. Century after century, at the courts of kings, on occasions of religious ceremony, at places of sacred pilgrimage, within the forest hermitages, these stories have been told and retold. In the *Ramayana* it is stated: "Whoever reads or hears the *Ramayana* will be free from all sin. A Brahmin reaps the advantage of reading the Vedas, a Kshatriya conquers his enemies, a Vaisya is blessed with riches, and a Sudra gains great fame." The same benefits were listed for the *Mahabharata*. No wonder, with such lavish promises of material and spiritual blessings to be conferred on knowers of the two great epics, that they became popular from end to end of India, and far beyond! In countless humble villages of mud and thatch, the glories of Epic India live on, undimmed, in the hearts of the people. The *Ramayana* is still acted as a play all over India every autumn.

No mere narrative summary can possibly give an adequate idea of the varied contents of these epics. One may follow the tales, like children, for their dramatic value, and be thrilled by the exciting wars between gods and demons, by the pageantry of royal courts, by the miraculous feats and brave deeds of beloved heroes of old. One may take them as a noble expression of the social ideals of loyalty, chastity, love, self-control, obedience, truthfulness and unselfishness. One may study them for the light they throw on the mythological or historical background of India itself and on the evolution of important religious ideas. One may read them as source books, tracing back to their inexhaustible inspiration the mighty streams of sculpture, painting, poetry and drama of later Hindu epochs. Or one may read them for the profound spiritual teachings which shine through them. It is because they continue to have something vital to say to all, irrespective of age or sex or social position or education, that they are so treasured and loved in India.

Rama, the ideal king, the hero of the *Ramayana*, was already looked upon as an avatar, or incarnation of the supreme god



Seventh Incarnation of Vishnu

Vishnu, when the epic first took shape. The idea had come into being that Vishnu, the preserving deity of the universe, repeatedly descended to earth under different forms, for the destruction of evil and the promotion of good. Rama was his seventh incarnation, and one of his two chief incarnations in human form, the other being Krishna. The traditional author of the *Ramayana* is the Brahmin rishi, Valmiki. Tired of the world and its ways, Valmiki retired to the forest. There the divine sage Narada appeared before him one day and recited the marvelous story of Rama, although all the events described by Narada were yet shrouded in the future. Valmiki longed to record the story, but he did not possess the necessary gift of language. At that moment he saw a cruel hunter shoot a male heron disporting itself happily on the bank of a river with its mate. The grief of the mate inspired Valmiki to utter compassionate words, and suddenly he perceived that what had issued from his mouth was a *sloka*, or couplet of sixteen-syllabled lines. In this sloka meter, Valmiki then composed the *Ramayana*.

Rama is said to have been born in the city of Ayodhya in the line of the solar kings, eldest son of King Dasaratha of Kosala and his first queen. Rama's brother Bharat was son of the second queen, and his twin brothers Lakshman and Satrugna were sons of the third queen. All four brothers were brought up, according to that polished and virtuous age, to be learned, wise, sweet of speech, brave, considerate and firm in their vows, but Rama the Lotus-eyed outshone all the others in excellence. When the time came for the old king to choose a successor, the councilors and citizens unanimously approved the installation of Rama as crown prince, or *Yuvaraj*. The streets of the capital were swept and watered, the houses were beflagged, the balconies were festooned with garlands and decorated with lamps. All was in readiness for the auspicious ceremony, which would take place on the morrow.

Then a servant maid, crooked of back as well as of mind, secretly sought out the second queen. How could she be so serene

and happy, when Rama, and not her own son Bharat, was about to be installed as heir apparent? The poisoned words entered the queen's heart, and soon a dark plot was hatched. The queen retired to the anger chamber of the palace, and there the doting old king found her, disheveled, her beautiful eyes red with weeping, her fair bosom heaving. Caresses and coaxing words at last drew forth her mind. Had not the king once promised her two boons, on an occasion long before when she had saved his life? She would have those boons granted now. For the first boon, she demanded the banishment of Rama for fourteen years to the Dandaka Forest, for the second boon, the installation of Bharat in his stead.

In spite of his great love for Rama, the old king was compelled to abide by his promise, for a king must keep his word, however great the cost. Rama was banished, and with him into exile went the faithful Lakshman, ever devoted to his eldest brother, and Rama's lovely young wife Sita, daughter of King Janaka of the Videhas, whom Rama had won as his bride in chivalrous contest at Mithila. Sita herself, on that happy occasion, had placed the flower garland round his neck, in token that she willingly chose him for her own dear husband. Now, in very different circumstances, the three royal exiles sorrowfully set forth from Ayodhya, amid the weeping of all the citizens.

It so happened that while these events were taking place Bharat and Satrughna, the fourth brother, were away at their uncle's place. Swift messengers were sent to fetch Bharat, who arrived just as King Dasaratha expired of grief. Spurning the throne which his foolish mother had thought to win for him, the noble Bharat set out at once accompanied by a vast concourse of citizens and soldiers to find Rama, bring him back and establish him on his rightful throne. He at last overtook Rama on the Chitrakuta Mountain, but Rama refused his entreaties, holding firm to his resolve of fulfilling to the letter his father's term of banishment. The weeping Bharat then returned to Ayodhya, taking with him a pair of Rama's golden sandals to place on the

throne. He would rule as regent in their name, he vowed, himself living as an ascetic, until the happy days of Rama's return.

Rama, Sita and Lakshman crossed the Vindhya and entered the dark demon-infested Dandaka Forest of the Deccan. Here they passed more than ten years, at times staying as welcome guests of Brahmins and rishis in the hermitages, at times living in one of the leafy huts which Lakshman constructed for them in the pleasant glades. At the request of the hermits, Rama engaged in fierce battles with the terrible Rakshasas, or demons, who also dwelt in the forest and often disturbed the meditation of the holy ones. By his prowess, many thousands of them were slain. But one day a Rakshasi, or female Rakshasa, named Surpanakha, sister of King Ravana of Lanka, or Ceylon, who was lord over all the Rakshasas, saw Rama and felt a burning desire to have him for her husband. Lakshman angrily cut off her nose and ears in punishment for her unchaste desires and sent her howling with rage and pain to her brother in Lanka. There, out of revenge, she won Ravana to her side by so describing the charms of Sita as to make Ravana desire her for himself. Summoning his minister Marichi, the possessor of great magical powers, he quickly devised a plan to capture Sita.

Back in her leafy hut, Sita suddenly saw a lovely jeweled deer playing among the trees and begged Rama to fetch it for her. Taking his bow and leaving Lakshman to guard her, Rama pursued the deer, which led him ever deeper and deeper into the forest. At last he let fly his arrow, and as he did so the demon Marichi, escaping from the form of the magic deer, cried out in a voice exactly imitating Rama's, "Ah, Sita! Ah, Lakshman!" Hearing that mournful cry far away, Sita felt faint with fear. Lakshman, unwilling to disobey Rama's orders not to leave her side, was at last reluctantly forced to yield to her imperious command to go quickly to the help of his elder brother. First, however, he drew a circle round the hut, telling her on no account to step outside it.

No sooner was Lakshman out of sight than an old Brahmin

ascetic approached and begged Sita to give him refreshment. Suspecting no harm, seeing in him only a revered holy man, and unheeding of Lakshman's warning, Sita confidently stepped beyond the circle with her offering. At that instant, Ravana assumed his own terrible form, with many arms and ten heads, and seizing Sita pitilessly dragged her away. In vain did the ancient bird Jatayu, who had once been a friend of King Dasaratha's, fight with Ravana in the forest. There was nothing extraordinary to the Indian mind of those days in having birds and animals talk and act like human beings, for all life was conceived as one, and the difference between the human and animal world was less sharp than it has now become. Jatayu was mortally wounded and Ravana lifted Sita into his sky car and bore her off in the direction of Lanka. Once, as they flew over a lonely mountain, Sita looked down and saw five monkeys assembled there. Quickly she dropped some of her jewels, in the hope that they might serve as a clue to the direction in which her captor had taken her.

When Rama and Lakshman found Sita gone, they set out in search of her, overcome with grief. Of every tree and vine and flower, of every stream and rock, they begged for news of her. The old dying bird Jatayu finally told how the cruel Ravana had dragged her away. Wandering here and there, the two brothers at last came to the mountain where the monkeys were. Hanuman, general and minister to the deposed monkey king Sugriva, produced Sita's jewels, which were recognized by Rama. Lakshman recognized only the anklets, for he had never allowed himself to gaze on the face of his brother's wife. Rama and Sugriva swore a bond of friendship. Rama promised to help Sugriva regain his throne, and Sugriva promised to send out his monkey hosts to discover Sita's hiding place. Rama then gave his signet ring to Hanuman with instructions to give it to Sita, should he succeed in finding her.

The faithful Hanuman, who is said to have been a son of Vayu, the Wind-god, after searching the southern region,

reached the sea and there learned that Ravana had taken Sita to the island of Lanka, many leagues distant across the water. Undaunted, he rushed up to the top of a great mountain at the edge of the sea and meditated on the task before him. As he meditated, he began to grow in size until, with a prodigious leap and a great shout of joy, he was able to jump across the water, and landed safely in Ceylon. Again reducing himself to his own size, he ran about looking for Sita, whom he found at last, a pale shadow of herself, imprisoned in a garden outside Ravana's palace, guarded by horrid Rakshasis. He waited until they fell asleep and then descended from a tree and gave Sita the ring and the joyful news that her rescue was not far off. Then, before departing, he set fire to the whole city of Lanka, using his own burning tail as a torch, but he himself did not burn, because his invisible father, the Wind-god, cooled his body and kept it free of pain.

So, at long last, guided by Hanuman, Rama, Lakshman, Sugriva and the monkey hosts advanced towards Lanka. They crossed the water, this time on a bridge of stones built for them by Nala, the chief monkey engineer. In the mighty battle which followed, magic weapons were countered with magic weapons. Once Lakshman was mortally wounded and was revived only when Hanuman, prototype of the devotee to whom nothing is impossible, fetched a healing herb from the Himalaya. Not being sure of the plant, Hanuman brought the whole mountain-top with him. But in the end, all the Rakshasas, including the ten-headed Ravana, lay dead and the deliverance of Sita was accomplished.

Then the story takes a strange turn. When Sita is brought, trembling and agitated, into the presence of Rama, it seems to him that his people may afterwards think she has been defiled by her stay in the house of another man. They will question her chastity. It is only after she has proved her innocence by voluntarily undergoing an ordeal by fire that he accepts her once again as his beloved, ever-pure and ever-faithful wife. The story does



Hanuman set Lanka on fire with his tail..

not end even here, however, though what follows may be a later addition. In spite of her innocence, after a time the people of Ayodhya begin to blame Sita for the ills which befall them and to murmur slanders against her name. Placing his duty to his people as king before his happiness as a man, Rama banishes her. She finds an asylum in Valmiki's hermitage, and there Rama's twin sons are born, to whom, as they grow up, Valmiki teaches the whole of the *Ramayana*. But Sita herself earnestly prays to Mother Earth. The earth opens, the goddess appears, seated on a throne, takes Sita on her lap and disappears with her forever.

To give a similar summary of the *Mahabharata* is an all but impossible task. The events and episodes it portrays are popularly supposed to belong to a later period than the *Ramayana*, simply because Krishna, the real hero of the *Mahabharata*, is believed to be a later incarnation of Vishnu than Rama. But unlike the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, often called the "Fifth Veda" on account of its attribution to Vyasa, compiler of the Vedas, is not a unified piece of work, either in authorship or in time of composition. The story of the great war between the Kauravas and Pandavas, the two branches of the Bharatas, which forms the main theme of the epic, is the glorified memory of some national event of great historic significance, but this story constitutes only about a fifth of the entire poem. Woven into its fabric is a stupendous miscellaneous collection of mythology, legends, fables, stories and philosophic discourses, many of them complete works in themselves. The whole epic is a veritable encyclopedia of human psychological types, and well has it been said that what is not in the *Mahabharata* is not in India. As a tiny fragment embedded in its vast mosaic, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, or Lord's Song, the discourse held on the battlefield between Krishna and the Pandava hero Arjuna, just before the battle begins, gives in a wonderfully dramatic and living way the essence of the highest philosophy of the *Upanishads*, and at the same time unites with it a new doctrine of salvation through love and devotion to the personal God.

The human heroes of the main story in the *Mahabharata* are the five Pandava brothers, Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna and the twins, Nakula and Sahadeva. They are all sons of Pandu, king of Hastinapur, descended through the Bharata line from the lunar kings of India. After Pandu's death, the five boys are brought up with their Kaurava cousins at Hastinapur by their blind uncle, Dhritarashtra, who rules the kingdom for Yudhishthira, the eldest son of Pandu. Their teacher in arms is Drona, a Brahmin, under whose expert guidance the Pandavas soon excel all others, thus arousing the jealousy of their cousins, and particularly of the eldest among them, Duryodhana.

The story from this point on develops the theme of the bitter conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Duryodhana persuades the blind weak king to send away the Pandavas and Kunti, their mother, and then treacherously attempts to destroy them by setting fire to the house in which they have taken up their residence. Warned in time, they escape, and then disguised as Brahmins boldly attend a "bride's choice" ceremony at the neighboring Panchala court. Arjuna, master of the bow, shoots an arrow through a whirling disk into the eye of a golden fish fastened to the top of a tall pole and is garlanded by Draupadi, the king's daughter, as victor. When the brothers return to their mother, Arjuna cries out in advance that he has brought a great prize. Without seeing Draupadi, Kunti counsels the brothers to share equally whatever has been brought by any one of them. So Draupadi becomes the wife of all five brothers, though in her heart she cherishes Arjuna above the others. This incident, unique in Indian literature, shows the antiquity of the story. It harks back to the extremely primitive custom of polyandry, or plural husbands, which may once have been practised in certain parts of India, just as it is still a common form of marriage in Tibet.

The five brothers, their fortunes somewhat rehabilitated by their alliance with King Drupada of Panchala, return again to Hastinapur, with Kunti and Draupadi. On the advice of the

great and wise Bhishma, grandfather of both the Pandava and Kaurava cousins, the kingdom is divided. The Pandavas build a new capital for themselves at Indra-prastha, the ruined site of which is supposed to lie close to the modern Delhi, and Yudhisthira celebrates the Coronation Ceremony. The jealousy of Duryodhana, however, prompts him to try to gain undisputed possession of the whole kingdom through guile. Yudhisthira, otherwise perfect, has one weakness — gambling. Duryodhana makes up his mind to take advantage of the fact that no Kshatriya can honorably refuse any type of challenge, and he arranges a gambling match between his own crafty uncle on one side and the eldest of the Pandavas on the other. Yudhisthira stakes, in turn, his wealth, his kingdom, his brothers and lastly the fair Draupadi herself. All are lost! The crowning humiliation comes when Draupadi is dragged into the open assembly hall and made to sit on Duryodhana's knee. At this crisis, the old blind king intervenes. Draupadi is restored to the Pandavas, but they are all sent into exile. For twelve long years, and one year more in which the condition is laid down that they must live in disguise without being recognized by anyone, they are to remain away. If they pass this difficult test, it is agreed that at the end of the thirteen years they may return and claim their kingdom.

Innumerable adventures befall the Pandavas in their long period of exile, and it is while they are guests in the forest hermitages that they are often beguiled by the tales related for their benefit by saintly hermits. At last the term of banishment comes to an end. Messengers are sent to Hastinapur, but Duryodhana still stubbornly refuses all overtures of peace and fair dealing. He sends word that he will not give his cousins even five villages as a share of the kingdom. War becomes inevitable, and each side sends forth an appeal for allies. Powerful kings come from every part of India to join either the Kauravas or Pandavas. Bhishma and Drona, out of a sense of obligation, remain with the Kauravas, though their sympathies are with the Pandavas. The brave Karna, a half brother of the Pandavas whom they had once

deeply insulted without knowing his relation to themselves, is naturally on the Kaurava side. The Pandavas have as supporters Drupada and many other mighty kings and warriors, but above all their cousin Krishna, king of the Yadavas, in reality depicted as the Lord himself. Both parties had simultaneously asked Krishna for his aid, and he had offered this alternative: the whole of his army to fight on one side, and he himself, without taking up arms, to act as a charioteer for the other. Arjuna at once chose Krishna; Duryodhana, the Yadava army.

The hosts assemble at Kurukshetra, the "field of Kuru," with their banners, drums and conch shells, their war chariots and mighty elephants, their cavalry and multitudinous infantry, and the Great Battle is joined. For eighteen days, it rages furiously, and never before was there any battle like it. In single combat between hero and hero, in battalions drawn up according to military strategy in the shape of crescent, square or spider web, countless thousands are slain. In the end, only one of Duryodhana's brothers remains alive, while on the Pandava side, out of all the great heroes, only the five brothers and Krishna survive. Such is the unparalleled destruction of the Bharata battle.

Although Yudhisthira eventually celebrates the Horse Sacrifice of universal monarchy, few are the kings left alive to acknowledge his victory. Now has come the end of the Dvapara age, and the Kali age is about to commence. Evil portents multiply. An old prophecy is fulfilled. Krishna himself, Lord though he is, is accidentally killed by a hunter. Flood and earthquake destroy the Yadava capital, which has now been shifted to Dwarka. The five brothers decide that the time has come for them to set out on their last journey, the journey of renunciation. Having installed Arjuna's grandson on the throne, they turn their faces towards the sacred Himalaya. On and on they go, higher and higher they climb. First marches Yudhisthira the Just, then the mighty Bhima, then Arjuna the perfect warrior, then Nakula, master of horses, then Sahadeva the skillful swordsman, then their beloved wife Draupadi and, at the very

end, a faithful dog. One by one, Draupadi and four of the brothers drop down by the wayside. Only the lonely figures of Yudhishthira and the dog march on. They arrive at heaven's gate, where Yudhishthira is given a vision of his brothers and Draupadi suffering terrible torments in hell. Preferring to share their fate, he refuses to enter the Abode of Bliss without them. He is then told that they have already preceded him to heaven. Still he refuses to enter, unless his faithful dog is allowed to accompany him. At last it is revealed that Dharma, god of righteousness, had himself assumed the form of the dog, in order to test the faith and loyalty of Yudhishthira to the utmost.

There is no space here even to speak of the lovely stories, now the household tales of every Hindu family, which are woven into the *Mahabharata*. Nala and Damayanti, Sakuntala and Dushyanta, Savitri and Satyavan — what names to conjure with! Were there ever wives sweeter, more noble, more chaste, more loving, than the heroines of these Indian tales? The immortal Savitri, by her perfect love, made Death himself give back her beloved Satyavan. And the great spiritual discourse delivered to the Pandavas by their grandfather Bhishma, as he lay dying on his bed of arrows, is one of the highest flights of Indian philosophy. As for the *Bhagavad-Gita*, it has been aptly called the Hindu Bible. For centuries the teachings delivered on the battlefield by Krishna, the Divine Charioteer, to the warrior Arjuna, have been read or recited daily by thousands — it may be millions — of Hindus. All these are part of Hindu India's heritage.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Yellow Robe*

THE POLITICAL and religious center of Indian interest again shifts farther east, this time to the rising kingdom of Magadha, on the fringe of ancient Kosala. For the first time, it is now possible to give fairly correct historical dates for actual events associated with real persons in India. In the sixth century B.C., two great religious leaders made their historic appearance in Magadha. They are Vardhamana, better known as Mahavira, the "Great Hero," whose name is connected with the religious system called Jaina, or Jainism, and Siddhartha Gotama (Gautama) — more simply the Buddha, or "Enlightened One" — founder of Buddhism. Bodily relics of the Buddha, bits of stone and ash, were discovered not so long ago inside an inscribed receptacle taken from an ancient Buddhist *stupa*, or relic mound, thus proving beyond doubt that he did really live. These relics are now carefully preserved at Sarnath, near Benares.

It is scarcely by accident that two important religious movements, in many ways remarkably alike, should spring up at the same time and in almost the same locality. The spirit of the new age initiated by the *Upanishads* was one of free inquiry, opposed to rituals and sacrifices. It expressed itself in an intellectual rebellion against the Brahmins and their claim to act as sole interpreters and intermediaries between gods and men. It was also a reaction against the cruelty of animal slaughter, on a vast scale, involved in the Vedic sacrifices. No doubt the high cost of the sacrifices helped to popularize the opposition. Another factor explaining the rapid growth of the new reform movements, even

within the lifetime of their founders, was that both Mahavira and Gotama taught in Prakrit, the ordinary spoken language of their day, abandoning Sanskrit to the Brahmins and the learned.

This same spirit of independence in the air also began to show itself in the appearance of popular forms of government, a little appreciated chapter of Indian history. Although monarchy was the typical form of government in ancient India, no Aryan king ever held completely autocratic powers. He could never say "I am the State," and it was his duties, rather than his privileges, that all the ancient texts of statecraft urged upon him. Even during the epic period when royal power was at its zenith, the village councils, the general assemblies, the caste and guild organizations, continued to foster and keep alive a healthy tradition of self-government among different sections of the people. Finally, a number of small states, in the Punjab and Sind, in Rajputana and in eastern India, adopted a genuinely republican and democratic form of government. The grammarian Panini refers to this type of government as *gana* government, or government "by numbers." Greek writers of the fourth century B.C. also describe the contemporary Indian republics and federations. Altogether, the names of eighty-one of them are now known. But the interesting republican experiment was soon swept out of India. It received a severe check under the expanding power of the imperial Mauryas, and the last of the little republics finally disappeared in the sixth century of the present era, during the revival of imperialism under the Guptas.

In the sixth century B.C., however, a democratic atmosphere prevailed in the areas where both Mahavira and Gotama were born and grew up. Videha, or northern Bihar, had then become part of a republican federation with the neighboring territory of the Lichavis, and it was at Vaisali, the Lichavi capital, that Mahavira was born. The Sakyas of Kapilavastu, a small state to the north near the border of Nepal, also had a republican type of government. The title of raja was used for their ruler, but it was

more or less equivalent to president, since rulers were elected at regular intervals from among the members of the Sakya clan. It was to this clan, or family, that Gotama, afterwards known as Sakyamuni, the Sage of the Sakyas, belonged. At the time of his birth, his father was the raja. It is significant that both Mahavira and Gotama modeled their religious sanghas, or orders, on the political sanghas, or free assemblies, with which they were already familiar in their own territories.

In spite of the reform spirit that animated both men, making them reject the final authority of the Vedas and of the priestly Brahmins, neither of them made any claim to have discovered the principles of a new religion. Both Jainism and Buddhism are typically Indian, their roots buried deep in the past of traditional Indo-Aryan thought. The ideal their founders preached was not fundamentally different from that of the *Upanishads*, though new technical terms came into use to describe their specific religious systems. Both rejected any idea of an original Creator, and hence offered no god for worship. Both accepted without question the current concepts of rebirth and karma, as well as the Brahmin ascetic's ideal of renunciation of the world and its pleasures. Buddhism taught that the world itself is impermanent and fleeting, that every compound must ultimately resolve back into its component parts, that there is no soul or permanent entity of being, and that attachment to what is impermanent inevitably brings pain. Jainism taught that while both matter and soul are permanent, the temporary association of soul with matter through karma inevitably brings pain. Both insisted that salvation is attainable through strenuous effort in this very life, and is not something to be won after death as a reward of ritual sacrifice. Salvation — called *moksha* or *nirvana* — is nothing more than the state or condition of freedom resulting from spiritual enlightenment and understanding of truth, with or without blissful consciousness, which is achieved by a pure life and deep meditation. It is an extinction, not necessarily of being, but of ignorance and craving, and it alone can

free an individual from the monotonous rounds of birth and death.

According to Jain belief, Mahavira was not really the founder of Jainism, but only the twenty-fourth and last, in this world cycle, of the great *tirthankaras*, or "ford makers," also called *jinas*, "conquerors," from which Jainism is derived. Although all are said to have preached exactly the same message, only the last two, Mahavira and his predecessor Parsva, are historical figures. Parsva retains a dim personality. Two or more centuries before Mahavira he lived in Benares, where he founded the ascetic order of the Nirgranthas, those "without ties." This order survived until Mahavira's time, and his parents are said to have been strongly attracted to it.

Mahavira, an older contemporary of Gotama, was the son of a Vaisali nobleman, and his mother was the sister of one of the Lichavi chiefs. He was also connected by family ties with Bimbisara, at that time king of Magadha. He was therefore a Kshatriya by birth, like all the twenty-three tirthankaras who preceded him. Mahavira married, but at the age of thirty he renounced the world and devoted the next twelve years of his life to severe austerities, undergoing almost unendurable hardships. It was during this period that he first threw away all his clothes, as a symbol of bodily consciousness, and for the rest of his life he went about entirely naked. When he was forty-two, a mystic religious experience of deep significance came to him. The time was now ripe for preaching his religious ideas, which he continued to do until his death at the little town of Pawa, near Rajagriha, the Magadha capital, when he was seventy-two. The exact date of his death is uncertain. It is usually given as 527 B.C., but the *Cambridge History of India* puts it sixty years later. He left behind him 14,000 followers, firmly united in a religious order made up of monks, nuns and householder disciples of both sexes.

For the attainment of salvation, the Jains laid down that right faith, right knowledge and right conduct must all be present to-

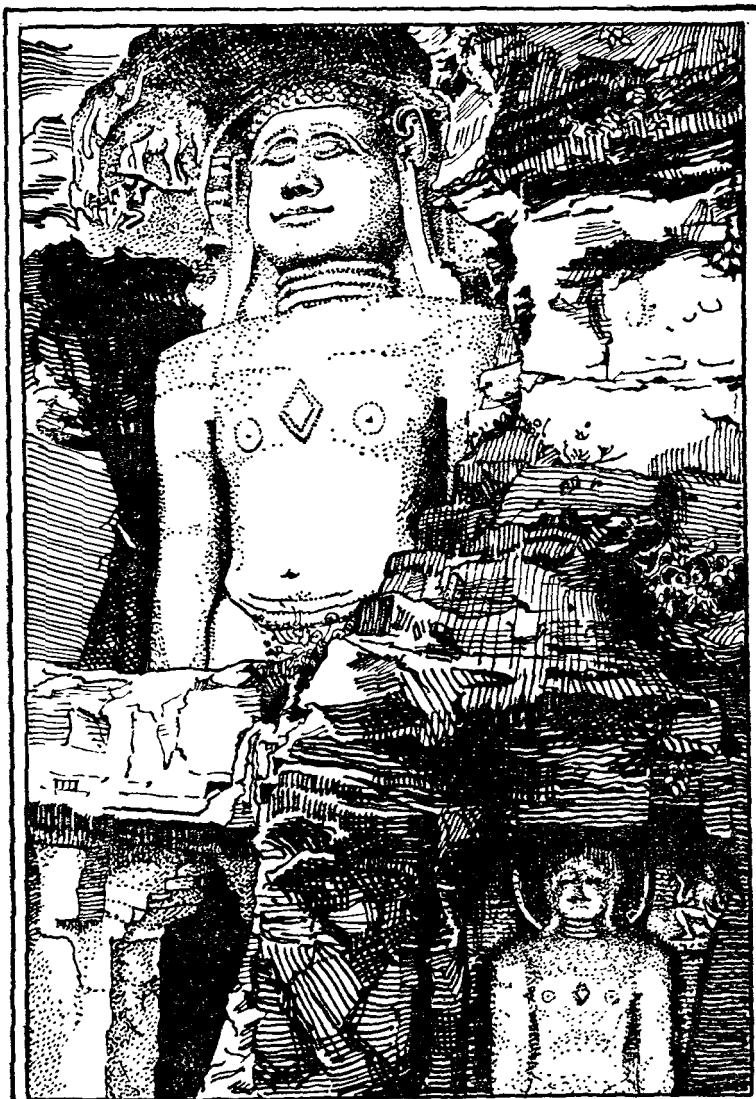
gether. One alone was insufficient. Right conduct meant the fulfillment of five vows, or abstinences, enjoined on both monks and laymen, though monks were naturally expected to observe them with greater rigidity and strictness. The vows were not to injure, not to lie, not to steal, not to be unchaste and not to strive after luxury and possessions. Superfluous wealth was to be disposed of in charity, particularly in the provision of medicines, in the building of asylums for decrepit animals, in the making of sacred books and in support of religious teachers. Non-injury, however, was the vital center of the Jain ethics. The smallest creature alive was credited with a soul. Therefore causing death to any living thing, whether by accident, by the nature of one's occupation, in self-protection, or for the mere wanton pleasure of killing or gratifying one's appetite, was considered the greatest of sins. Water must be strained, lest invisible insects be swallowed. A monk must not walk at night, lest he tread upon an unseen worm.

In spite of its extreme asceticism, Jainism spread rapidly to different parts of India, and the royal patronage it received did much to help its growth. About 300 B.C., as a result of a severe famine, Bhadrabahu, the eighth great sage after Mahavira, departed with a group of *śrāvanas*, or monks, for the south. Broadcasting their teachings throughout the Deccan, they founded a Jain colony at Sravana Belgola, in what is now the state of Mysore.

In time, a split arose between the southern and northern monks, and two sects came into existence. Although there were no differences in regard to Jain doctrine, the two groups disagreed on minor matters of discipline. The southern group, which took the stricter view, became known as the Digambaras, or "sky-clad" — that is, naked — because its members adhered to the practice of going without clothes. The northern Jains were called Svetambaras, or "white-clothed." The Digambaras still maintain their chief hold in the south, but they are also strong in eastern Rajputana. The present center of the Svetambara sect

is in western Rajputana and Gujarat. The Jain community as a whole now numbers about a million and a half in India. The lay members are noted, rather oddly, for their wealth. Debarred from many professions, for example, the army or agriculture, in which the taking of life is unavoidable, they have found a safe refuge in trade. At the same time, they are noted for their strict vegetarianism, their charity and the many animal hospitals they have built and endowed throughout India. Pious Jains may still be seen regularly feeding the birds or scattering sugar for ants, and it is said that there are some who distort their solicitude for small life to such an extent that they actually will hire boys to offer their arms for mosquitoes and other unpleasant insects to feed on. It is significant that Mohandas K. Gandhi, long the beloved national leader of India and well-known apostle of *ahimsa*, or non-violence, was born in a Gujarati family in which Jain ideas were deeply cherished and respected.

Through the centuries, the Jain contribution to art and literature in India was distinctive. The peculiar style of the medieval Jain painting and sculpture is easily recognized. The painting, with heavy outlines and bold, brilliant colors, is almost entirely confined to illustrations of Jain manuscripts. The sculpture is associated with Jain temples and cave retreats. There the twenty-four tirthankaras are represented with crossed legs and folded hands, or standing stiffly straight, all exactly alike, except for a tiny differentiating symbol engraved on the bare breast of each figure. The Jains also carved colossal freestanding statues and giant bas-reliefs of their saints. Of these, the most generally familiar is the huge tenth-century stone image of Gotama, at Sravana Belgola. This image is seventy feet high. It is completely nude, like all Jain statues, but termite nests indicated about the saint's feet and carved vines gracefully entwining his lower limbs and arms suggest the concentration that is timeless, the peace that is eternal, the unshaken nobility of the soul's quest for the ultimate truth. But on the whole, the ascetic ideals of Jainism discouraged a virile expression in art form. Jain sculp-



JAIN Colossus 57 ft. high · Rock of GWALIOR.  
A sky-clad JINA or Spiritual Conqueror.

ture lacks the variety and charm, both in subject matter and technique, of Buddhist art, and equally misses the dramatic intensity of Hindu art.

The medieval Jain temples, however, are amazingly beautiful. On out-of-the-way mountaintops, remote and secluded, the Jains built veritable temple cities. White and shining against the blue sky, Girnar and Palitana, both in Gujarat, have an ethereal unreality. Palitana has 863 temples closely packed together along a mountain crest, enclosed within a massive battlemented wall. The earliest temples were destroyed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by puritanical Muslims, who hated image and temple worship, and the existing temples date only from the sixteenth century or later. The exquisite white marble Dilwara temples at Mount Abu, in Rajputana, are older. They belong to the eleventh and thirteenth centuries and are unrivaled in the whole of India for their delicate carvings and lavish traceries.

In the realm of literature, the Jains produced a great deal of notable work, both religious and secular in character. Their earliest scriptures, called Agamas, were written in the Ardha-Magadhi, or "half-Magadhi" dialect of northern India. They also composed works in a Jain Prakrit which seems to have been a parent of the modern Mahratti. From the tenth or eleventh century, the Jains began to use Sanskrit and made Sanskrit translations of their sacred scriptures. At the same time, they made good literary use of every language current wherever they established themselves. Jain influence in Tamil literature has been well established. Nor did the Jain authors limit themselves to the usual religious commentaries and expositions. They made original contributions in the field of poetry, drama, moral tales, grammar, philosophy and logic. The best known Jain author is Hemachandra, who lived in Gujarat at the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth century.

It was Buddhism and not Jainism, however, that was to stir most deeply the heart of Asia and, for a period, to awaken a whole continent to new, intense spiritual life. Buddha — seen

in the flesh by his immediate disciples, heard about by the less fortunate of his time, merely read about today in the Buddhist holy books — is certainly one of the great beings of the world. Who could assert that his own way of life would not be made better, through following, in even a small measure, the teachings of the Blessed One? It is no wonder that every episode of his life, as given in the early Buddhist scriptures, before long became thickly encrusted with marvels and miracles contributed by loving devotees, and that out of these sprang a wonderful art, giving inspiration to India and the rest of Asia for fifteen hundred years. The Buddha story appealed above all to the imagination and the heart. Sober facts, in their literalness, seldom move men or nations to great endeavor. But religion, poetry and art build dynamic lives, and thus help to create the very facts out of which the texture of history is afterwards woven. So the Buddhist legends quite rightfully have a place in the history of India.

We know that the historical Buddha was almost certainly born in 563 B.C. and died in 483 B.C. at the age of eighty. But India likes to think in much longer terms. The legend says that he was preceded, like Mahavira, by a long line of great beings. In the remote past ages of the world, there were twenty-four other Buddhas. Each made a great resolve to become perfectly enlightened, and then, as a Bodhisattva — one destined to become a Buddha — strove through countless lives to do good and to acquire the Buddha qualities. Having achieved enlightenment, all in turn were freed from the endless rounds of birth and death. In exactly the same way, Siddhartha Gotama was born again and again, before his historical appearance on earth. Many were his past lives. He had been born as a monkey, a lion, a tiger, an elephant, a deer, a jackal. He had been a rat, a fish, a lizard, a frog and a snake. He had been crow, peacock and woodpecker. He had been potter and smith, gambler and thief, king and king's son, ascetic and Brahmin. But in each of his previous lives he had performed some noble act of self-sacrifice, which had taken him a little farther along the path to Buddhahood.

As a result of his accumulated good deeds, he reached the Tusita Heaven of the Bodhisattvas. Considering carefully the conditions for his birth, he chose Kapilavastu as the country, Suddhodana of the Gotama family of the Sakyas as his father and Maya as his mother. Then he descended from the Abode of Bliss in the shape of a six-tusked white elephant, bearing a white lotus in his silvery trunk, and entered the womb of the queen as she lay asleep on her couch on a day of full moon, during the midsummer festival. When Maya awoke, she told Suddhodana of her strange dream. Brahmins were summoned, and they made this prophecy: A son would be born. "And he, if he continue to live the household life, will become a universal monarch, but if he leave the household life and retire from the world, he will become a Buddha, and roll back the clouds of sin and folly of this world."

In due time, Queen Maya asked permission to go to her parents' home for the delivery of her child, as was the custom, and set out accompanied by her ladies and a thousand courtiers of Kapilavastu. Midway lay the pleasant grove of Lumbini, with birds flitting among the branches of the trees and bees humming from flower to flower. Desiring to rest, the queen descended from her palanquin and entered the garden, and there, standing upright and holding a branch of a sal tree, she gave birth to her child. The angels of all the heavens rejoiced and sang and showered flowers upon the sacred scene, and the gods Brahma and Indra came down and received the baby in a golden net, while two Naga kings, of the serpent world, appeared in the sky and caused two streams of water, one warm and one cold, to flow for the cleansing bath. Then the Four Guardians of the Four Quarters received him from the gods and passed him into the hands of men. Before the infant could be placed on the cloth spread for him, he stood erect, walked seven steps toward the east and shouted in a noble voice, "Chief am I in all the world!" And it is related that at the selfsame instant when the Future Buddha was born — for he was yet to attain enlighten-



*Queen Maya with the baby Prince Siddhartha*

ment — Yasodhara, afterwards the mother of Rahula his son, his faithful groom Channa, his horse Kanthaka, his playmate Kaludayin, his favorite disciple Ananda, and the sacred Bodhi tree, under which he would receive his illumination, were also born.

When he was five days old, the child was named Siddhartha, "he who has achieved his aim." On the seventh day, his mother Queen Maya died and he was given into the charge of his kindly aunt Queen Maha Prajapati. Once more seven Brahmins prophesied that he would become either a universal monarch or a Buddha, but an eighth Brahmin, a young man named Kaundinya, prophesied that because his person bore the thirty-two auspicious signs, he would indeed become a Buddha.

King Suddhodana did not like the idea that his son would renounce the world. He inquired what would induce him to do so, and was told that when Siddhartha saw the four omens — an Old Man, a Sick Man, a Corpse and an Ascetic — he would make the great renunciation. Thinking to himself, "From this time forth, let no such things come near my son," Suddhodana

had three mansions for the three seasons built for Prince Siddhartha, and enclosed them within a great walled garden. Then he placed guards without, to insure that the sights of ill omen should never meet the eyes of the prince, and he sought to beguile him with amusements and to chain his mind to worldly things.

The time came when the prince had reached manhood, and a wife was to be chosen for him. She was his cousin Yasodhara. Her father, the chief minister, thinking the young prince too softly nurtured, demanded that Siddhartha first be put to the twelvefold test of skill in mental and physical accomplishments, with other youths of his age. He triumphed over them all. So the marriage was richly celebrated, and still within his guarded palace Siddhartha knew not the meaning of sorrow. By his father's orders, he was constantly attended by a host of beautiful maidens, who played and sang and danced for him. The word death was never uttered in that secluded pleasure house. Even the gardeners, before each new day dawned, gathered the withering flowers from trees and bushes so that no hint of decay or death might stir to questioning the mind of the prince.

Did the king really think to hold back Siddhartha from his destiny? In the Celestial Abode, the gods knew the time of the going forth was near. Siddhartha asked no one's permission on the day he ordered his charioteer to bring his chariot with its four white horses and drive him to the royal park. Near one of the city gates of Kapilavastu there suddenly appeared before him an Old Man, wasted with age, gray-haired, bent double and leaning on a staff. "What kind of man is this?" he asked of Channa, his charioteer, and turned back hurriedly with agitated heart. On successive days — or some say he saw all four omens on the same day — he met a Sick Man, a Dead Man and a Hermit. From the serene expression on the face of the ascetic, he alone, it seemed, was free from suffering and beyond the reach of life's ills. From his charioteer, Siddhartha learned for the first time that all men born must indeed suffer sickness, grow

old and die, and can in no wise escape. He was plunged in grief for the fate of men, and a strange thing clutched his heart and his face was wet with his first tears.

At this very moment, a messenger arrived from King Sudhodana, announcing that a son had been born to Yasodhara. On hearing of the birth of his son, the prince cried out, "An impediment has come into being, a bond has come into being!" This saying was reported to the king and because of it the king named the child Rahula, or "Fetter."

Pensively, Siddhartha drove back to the palace. A young girl, Kisa Gotami, chanced to look down from her rooftop as he passed below. Struck by the beauty of the prince, she spontaneously burst into song, "Blessed that mother is, happy that father is, peaceful that wife is, who calls such a one lord." But the words "blessed," "happy," "peaceful," in the language she used, can also mean "gone out," "extinguished," "ceasing to be." Like a flame, thought the prince, the fires of hatred and delusion, the troubles of the mind, should go out, be extinguished, and cease to be. "Sweet is the lesson this singer has taught me," he reflected, "for the going out which is Peace, is that which I have been trying to find." Taking off his necklace of pearls, he sent it to Kisa Gotami as a "teacher's fee."

That night he lay down as usual on his couch. The women of the palace, seeing his indifference, dropped their instruments and fell asleep. They lay in uncomely attitudes, their clothes in disarray. Seeing them thus, Siddhartha was filled with intense loathing. It seemed to him that he was in a stifling charnel house. "Roused into activity like a man who is told that his house is on fire," in the words of the text, he rose swiftly. The great renunciation, from which there would be no turning back, was already made. He would seek, and would not rest until he found, a way out of sorrow and suffering, despair and death, not for himself alone, but for all mankind. Calling his charioteer, he ordered him to saddle the horse Kanthaka, and the horse, as the girth was being drawn tight, understood that his master

was about to carry out the great renunciation and gave a mighty neigh of joy. Had not the gods muffled it, the sound would have waked the sleeping city.

Siddhartha then thought, "I will take just one look at my son." He entered the apartments of Rahula's mother, and by the light of the lamp fed with sweet-smelling oil saw her sleeping on a bed strewn with jasmine flowers, one hand resting on the head of her little son. If he should lean down to touch her or the child, she would awake, and he might be prevented from carrying out his great resolve. Softly he closed the door, saying to himself, "I will come back and see him when I have become a Buddha." Then he mounted Kanthaka, and Channa followed him. At the time of the going forth, the Future Buddha was twenty-nine years old.

When he reached the city gate, it mysteriously opened to let him pass, and the gods themselves came down and held the hoofs of Kanthaka, so that their clatter might not arouse the sleeping guards. But one more obstruction remained. Suddenly Mara the Evil One stood in front of him, offering universal sovereignty if he would abandon his purpose. Rebuking the tempter, the Bodhisattva continued on his way. He crossed three kingdoms and at last dismounted on the farther side of a river. There he took off his ornaments and bade Channa carry them back to the king with the tidings of his son's departure. Channa sorrowfully took leave, and the horse Kanthaka wept as he licked his master's feet. Now the Future Buddha took up his sword and cut off his long black hair and tossed it, together with his jeweled headdress, into the air. Immediately it was caught up by the gods and carried to heaven. Next he exchanged his rich dress for the tattered ochre-colored garments of a hunter or, as others say, Brahma in the guise of a hunter appeared and handed him the eight requisites of a monk.

The Future Buddha, dressed in the yellow robe, continued on foot to Rajagriha, the capital of the Magadha kingdom, where Bimbisara was then king. As he went through the streets, beg-

ging his food and accepting whatever was placed in his alms bowl, the king's men reported the presence of the handsome young mendicant. Drawn without knowing why, Bimbisara sought out the stranger and found him, having conquered disgust, partaking for the first time in his life of the beggar's dole. Refusing the king's offer of honor and wealth, the Future Buddha promised that after he had become a Buddha he would again return to Magadha.

Soon after, he met two Yogis on his way, masters of the art of ecstatic trance. He stayed with them for some time, faithfully practising their discipline, but he did not find enlightenment. Proceeding to Uruvela, near Gaya, he was joined by a group of five Brahmin ascetics, one of whom was the young man Kaundinya who at his birth had prophesied his Buddhahood. Here at Uruvela the Bodhisattva entered upon the period of his great struggle.

For six long years he underwent prolonged fasts and endured the uttermost penance and mortification of the body, while the five Brahmins, thinking, "Now he will become a Buddha," and again, "Surely now he will become a Buddha," stayed by him and served him as best they could. But though his body lost its golden color and grew dark, and though his skin became parched and dry and he was like a skeleton, all his self-mortification availed nothing. When he saw that his penances were no more than an attempt to tie the air into knots, he went again to beg ordinary food in the village. His five companions, saying among themselves, "He has lost the struggle! What now could we get from him?" then left him and went to the Deer Park near Benares.

It was the full-moon day of the month of May. Wandering towards the Nairanjana River, the Future Buddha received from the hands of Sujata, a village maiden, a bowl of sweetened rice and milk. After taking his bath in the river, he divided the food into forty-nine small portions and slowly ate them; one portion for each of the seven times seven days he would touch

no food after experiencing enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. The rest of the day he spent in a pleasant grove, and when evening came he walked towards the Tree of Enlightenment. On the path he met a grasscutter. Accepting from him a gift of grass, he spread it beneath the tree, and sat down facing east. There he made this resolve: "Let my skin, my nerves, and my bones dry up, and likewise my flesh and blood; let this body dissolve back into primal nothingness, if need be: but until I attain Supreme Enlightenment, I will not leave this seat!"

Immediately the Evil One let loose against him nine storms of wind, rain, rocks, weapons, blazing coals, hot ashes, sand, mud and darkness. But the wind, as it reached him, died down, failing to flutter even as much as the edge of his garment. The rain was not able to wet him, even as much as a dewdrop. The smoking weapons, hurtling towards him, fell at his feet in the form of flowers. The Future Buddha moved not. Then Mara, enraged, screamed that he had no right to the seat under the Bodhi tree and commanded him to leave it. Stretching forth his right hand, the Future Buddha then called upon the earth to bear witness to the inexhaustible gifts he had made in previous lives, and the earth thundered, "I bear witness!" Hearing that miraculous cry, the hosts of Mara broke and scattered as dry leaves.

Now he remained motionless beneath the tree, his mind fully concentrated, steady as a flame in a windless place. In the first watch of the night, the endless procession of his past lives in all their details was revealed to him. In the middle watch, his Buddha-eye opened, and all worlds, past and to come, lay stretched out before him. In the last watch, he fathomed the secret of universal suffering and the way out. Ignorance was dispelled and knowledge arose in him. Darkness was dispelled and light arose. He had attained the goal. He had become a Buddha.

The Blessed One continued to sit motionless beneath the Bodhi tree, enjoying the bliss of deliverance. Four weeks passed.

Then he sat for another week under the goatherd's banyan tree, where the three daughters of Mara — Craving, Discontent and Lust — again vainly tried to tempt him. Then he sat under the Muchalinda tree, and at this time a great storm arose, but Muchalinda, the Naga king who was tutelary deity of that place, made seven coils around the body of the Blessed One and raised seven hoods over his head for a canopy. Then, for a time, he sat under the Rajayatana tree. On the last day of the seventh week from the time of the enlightenment, two passing merchants offered him barley cakes and honey. Having no bowl in which to receive the offering, the Buddha asked within himself how he should receive it. Immediately the Four Guardians came from the Four Quarters, each bearing a bowl. Saying "Let them become one," the Blessed One received the food offering, ate it and gave thanks.

The thought arose in his mind that the ignorance-dispelling doctrine that had revealed itself to him was deep and difficult to grasp, and it seemed to him that few would be able to comprehend it. Brahma, perceiving his mood of hesitation, beseeched him to proclaim the doctrine, and out of compassion for the world the Blessed One agreed. Wondering to whom he should proclaim it, he first thought of his two former teachers as men quickly able to understand it. At the same instant, however, he perceived by his inner knowledge that one of the masters of Yoga had died seven days before and the other had passed away that very evening. He next thought of the five Brahmins who had been his companions for six years during his great struggle. Perceiving that they were in the Deer Park near Benares, he set out for that place. But those five Brahmins, their locks matted and their bodies smeared with ashes, when they saw the Blessed One approaching, decided among themselves that they would offer him a seat, because he was of noble birth, but they would not arise and reverence him, because he had abandoned the struggle. The Blessed One concentrated his good will upon them, and at once, through no will of their own, they arose from

their seats and bowed before him. Then to these five Brahmins the Blessed One preached the first sermon after his enlightenment, setting in motion the Wheel of the Law, as it is called in the Buddhist books.

He exhorted them to avoid the two extremes, pursuit of worldly pleasures, on the one hand, and performance of useless austerities, on the other, and to follow instead the Middle Path. He explained to them the Four Noble Truths regarding suffering, namely, its nature, its origin in desire, the possibility of ending it by ending desire, and the eightfold means of accomplishing this through the cultivation and practice of right views, aspirations, speech, conduct, living, effort, thought and meditation. When he had finished, the five Brahmins to whom he had preached the first sermon were established in the path, and with these five, the Buddha founded the first Order of Buddhist Monks.

Soon afterwards there came to him a young man named Yasa, of good family, capable of entering upon the path, and he and fifty-four of his companions were also received into the new Order. The Buddha then sent out his sixty disciples to preach in the ordinary language of the people, not in the Sanskrit of the Vedas or of the learned Brahmins. "Go forth and journey from place to place," he said, "for the welfare of many, for the happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and welfare and happiness of both gods and man. Go no two of you together. Preach the Law, sound in the beginning, sound in the middle, sound in the end, in the spirit and in the letter. Proclaim the Holy Life in all its fullness and purity."

Himself returning to Uruvela, he converted the three learned Kassapa brothers, worshippers of the Vedic fire rites, together with one thousand of their followers, through miracles he performed in walking on the water and overcoming a frightful serpent that had taken up its abode in Kassapa's fire temple. Then he proceeded on to Rajagriha in fulfillment of his promise to Bimbisara, the Magadha king. Hearing that the Buddha had

arrived, Bimbisara came to meet him with a large retinue of Brahmins and householders, and the Buddha addressed them. He prescribed no rites or sacrifices for them, but spoke of almsgiving, morality and the blessedness of renunciation. When their minds had become softened, "like a clean cloth ready to take the dye," he preached the incomparable doctrine of how to find peace, through the knowledge that gives peace, by living a holy life. King Bimbisara, his doubts and perplexities gone, asked the Blessed One to accept him as a lay disciple. On the following day he presented to the Buddha the garden known as the Bamboo Grove, pleasantly situated outside the town, as a residence for the monks, and this became the first Buddhist monastery. It was also at Rajagriha that Sariputra and Moggallana, afterwards the Buddha's two foremost disciples, were converted and accepted into the Order.

Already the fame of the Blessed One was spreading far and wide. King Suddhodana heard that his son was now staying at Rajagriha and sent his childhood playmate Kaludayin to beg him to return to Kapilavastu. The Buddha set out with twenty thousand followers, and in two months' time reached the capital of the Sakyas. There he took up his residence in a grove outside the city. The Sakyas came to meet him with flower garlands, but they were proud and stubborn, and the elder relatives required a miracle to convince them that the former Prince Siddhartha was really worthy of their reverence. Understanding their mind, he at once rose up into the air to preach the Law. His father and the other Sakyas immediately did homage to him, and afterwards his half brother Nanda, his cousins Devadatta, Anuruddha and Ananda, and many more of his kinsmen, as also Upali the barber, gave up the world and followed him.

The day after he had performed the miracle of walking in the air, the Blessed One and all the monks went to the city to beg their food from door to door, according to mendicant custom, but Suddhodana took the bowl from his son's hands and led him and all his retinue into the palace, and there served

them with savory food. When the meal was over, the ladies of the household also came to do him reverence, but one, the mother of Rahula, did not come, saying to herself, "If I have any value in his eyes, my lord will himself come to me."

The Blessed One became aware of the tumult of her thoughts and went to her apartment, accompanied by his father and two disciples. Yasodhara threw herself on the floor and held him by the feet until suddenly recollecting herself and restraining her emotions, she rose quickly and stood aside. Then Suddhodana told the Blessed One how, when she heard that he had put on the yellow robe of the monk, she too had clothed herself in yellow garments, and when he gave up garlands and sweet-smelling ointments, she abandoned them, and when he ate but one meal a day, she adopted the same rule for herself, and when he renounced a soft bed for sleeping, she nightly spread her mat on the bare floor. The Blessed One, with infinite love and compassion, silently blessed her, and in time the fruit of that blessing became hers. Later, when his aunt, the venerable Maha Prajapati, earnestly besought permission to become a nun, and Ananda, the favorite disciple, pleaded for the admission of women into the Order, so that they too might become fully established in the path of renunciation and holiness, the Blessed One acquiesced, and at that time the mother of Rahula also joined the Order and became one of the first Buddhist nuns.

But before this, while her heart was yet troubled and while the Buddha was still staying at Kapilavastu, Yasodhara sent Rahula to his father one day with instructions to say to him: "Father, I am the prince. Give me the treasure; for a son is heir to his father's property." The boy came and stood near the Blessed One. "Happy, O monk, is thy shadow!" he said. Then he repeated his mother's message. The Buddha, looking down at him, reflected with grave tenderness, "I will give him today the wealth obtained under the Bodhi tree and make him heir to a spiritual kingdom." Rahula was then taken into the Order.

Throughout Magadha and the neighboring kingdom of Ko-

sala, and in the Ganges villages, the Buddha tirelessly preached the new religion. Many thousands put on the yellow robe and followed him. Gravely the monks walked from village to village, from city to city, spreading the message. During the four months of the rainy season, however, they went into retreat according to the rules laid down by the Blessed One after the building of the Jetavana monastery.

A rich merchant of Kosala, named Anathapindika, who often traveled to Rajagriha with his caravan, heard the Buddha preaching on one occasion and was immediately converted. Afterwards he bought from Prince Jeta, son of King Prasenajit of Kosala, a big garden called Jetavana lying just outside the royal capital of Sravasti. Here he built a great monastery as a residence for the Blessed One and the Order of yellow-robed monks and nuns, and here, at Jetavana, the Buddha himself is said to have spent no less than twenty-five rain-retreats during his lifetime. Of the 550 Jataka, or Birth, stories, in which he narrated the circumstances of his past lives as a Bodhisattva, 410 were told at Jetavana.

Here, too, he performed several miracles to confound the leaders of heretical sects. He projected himself in multiple forms, and he caused a great highway to appear in the sky, whereon he walked with streams of water issuing from his head and jets of flame from his feet. As he preached to the multitude the Way of Truth, a wonderful golden light suddenly fell upon the whole world. After this miracle, he disappeared and reappeared in the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods, where he taught the doctrine to his mother Maya, who had died when he was but a week old. At the end of three months, he descended to earth once more by a jeweled staircase, with Brahma accompanying him on his right hand and Indra on his left. Of the many other marvels of his long life, of his subjugation of the infuriated elephant sent against him by his jealous cousin Devadatta, of his innumerable acts of courtesy and kindness, of the thousands of converts he won, including Angulimala the robber and Am-

rapali the courtesan of Vaisali, of the wise and noble words he spoke, one must read for oneself in the Buddhist holy books.

Forty-five years from the time of the enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha incessantly preached his religion of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path of Salvation. Then, when he was eighty years of age, he bade farewell to Rajagriha, where Ajatasatru was now king, and turned his face towards Vaisali. Looking back for the last time at Vaisali, he passed on northward through the villages of the Malla clan. At one where he rested for a time he accepted food from the hands of a humble smith named Chunda. Soon after this, he was overtaken by illness, and he knew that the end of his long ministry was approaching. He journeyed on a little farther to Kusinagara, not far from the borders of the Sakya country of his birth, and there he asked Ananda to prepare a bed between two sal trees in a grove outside the town. He lay down with his head to the north, resting on his right side, with one foot above the other. Ananda could contain his grief no longer. He went into the monastery near by, leaned against the doorpost and wept. The Blessed One then sent for him and reminded him that all things are transitory in this world. "Enough, Ananda, do not weep. Have I not already told you, Ananda, that it is in the very nature of all things near and dear to us that we must divide ourselves from them? How is it possible, Ananda, that whatever has been born, has come into being, is organized and perishable, should not perish?" So saying, lest afterwards they should regret that they had not been present and reproach themselves, he sent Ananda to inform the Mallas in their assembly hall that during the last watch of the night he would attain Nirvana — the ultimate goal.

Mindful and composed, during the first and second watches of the night, the Blessed One gave last instructions to the monks. "It may be, Ananda, that in some of you the thought may arise: 'The word of the Master is ended, we have no teacher any more.' But it is not thus, Ananda, that you should regard it. The Doc-

trine and the Rules of the Order, which I have set forth and laid down for you all, let them, after I am gone, be the Teacher to you." There came a wandering ascetic named Subhadra, seeking to have certain doubts removed from his mind. Ananda would not let him approach the Blessed One, saying, "Trouble him not. The Blessed One is weary." But the Buddha called him and patiently explained once more the Eightfold Path. Thus Subhadra was the last person accepted into the Order as a direct disciple of the Blessed One. When the third watch of the night came, the Blessed One addressed the monks for the last time, saying, "And now, O monks, I take my leave of you. Decay is inherent in all component things. Work out your salvation with diligence." Then, passing through all the successive stages of meditation, he entered Nirvana.

The Mallas performed the cremation ceremony of the Blessed One. Afterwards, when seven other claimants arose, demanding a share of the sacred relics, the Mallas refused to part with them. So the others sent their armies and prepared for war. The War of the Relics, as it is called, was settled by an agreement to divide the remains into eight portions. These portions were taken to different places, and eight stupas, or relic mounds, were built over them. Two hundred and fifty years later, seven of these stupas were opened by King Asoka, who redivided the relics and distributed them in many thousands of stupas, which he had erected in all parts of India.

The main events in the life of Gotama the Buddha, easily discernible through the web of fancy, can be found in the Pali Canon. This Pali Canon, the earliest existing form of the Buddhist scriptures, was written down in Ceylon not later, and perhaps rather earlier, than the first century B.C. Other written versions, of course, must have previously existed in India, but all have been lost. Pali itself means "text." The word was first applied to the Canon to distinguish it from the commentaries, but it is now generally used for both the canonical language and

script, as they have originally come down from Ceylon. The Pali language is a literary Prakrit, allied to Sanskrit, derived from the actual speech used by the Buddha in the fifth and sixth centuries before the present era, or else the Magadha court language of the great Buddhist emperor Asoka in the third century B.C. In any case, Pali was widely understood over a large part of India and Ceylon in Asoka's time.

The Pali scriptures consist of twenty-seven books, with altogether 84,000 sections. Out of these, 82,000 sections are made up of the words of the Buddha, the small remainder being ascribed to his disciples. The Canon is divided into three *Pitakas*, or "baskets." The first is the *Vinaya*, which contains the monastic rules laid down by the Buddha. The second is the *Sutta* portion (the Pali equivalent of Sanskrit *Sutra*) which gives the Buddhist doctrine, or law, preached by the Buddha in the form of sermons, discourses or sayings, in both prose and verse, as also a few discourses by disciples. Included in this portion are the fascinating Jatakas, in each of which the Buddha tells a story related to one of 550 of his previous births. Each Jataka begins with a Story of the Present, which then inspires him to tell the Story of the Past. In concluding, he identifies the persons or animals in the Story of the Past with himself, the monks and the other persons who figure in the Story of the Present. The Jatakas, which may have been adapted from folk tales long current in India, not only teach the Buddhist ethics but display shrewd humor and wisdom. It has been said of them that they represent the oldest, most complete and most important collection of folklore in the world. The third section of the Pali Canon is the *Abhidhamma*, which represents an analysis of the psychology and metaphysics on which the Buddhist doctrine is based.

The material embodied in the Pali scriptures represents the memorized teachings of the Buddha, as first handed down orally among the Buddhist monks in India. There is every reason to believe in their accuracy and faithful transcription. The First Buddhist Council was called at Rajagriha, almost immediately



after the death of the Buddha. Five hundred of his direct disciples came together under the leadership of the venerable Kassapa and recited the precepts in unison, so that nothing should be forgotten. Just over a hundred years later, in 377 B.C., a Second Buddhist Council was held at Vaisali, to settle a dispute which had arisen among the monks in regard to some of the rules of discipline. Still a Third Buddhist Council was held at the instance of Asoka in the Mauryan capital of Pataliputra in about 240 B.C. It was at this Third Council that the Pali Canon was revised, completed and finally closed. Only a year later Asoka sent his son and daughter, who had joined the Order, to carry Buddhism to Ceylon, and with them must have gone the Pali Canon, very much in the form in which it has come down to us.

For a thousand years after the death of the Buddha, nearly five centuries before the birth of Christ, Buddhism continued to grow in popularity and to expand in all directions. Yet it is probable that in India many more persons always remained loyal to the traditional forms of religious faith and did not adopt Buddhism. Buddhism attacked the power of the Brahmins. It ignored rituals. It threw most of the Vedic gods into the dust heap. No wonder it aroused bitter hostility. Presently the Hindu revival movement gained headway, and Buddhism began to languish. At last the deathblow was struck by the Muslims when they swept across India at the beginning of the thirteenth century and with fanatical zeal burned the monasteries and scattered their treasures to the four winds. The Buddhist monks were killed, or fled away to Burma, Nepal or Tibet. Yet because Siddhartha Gotama was a true son of India, uncompromisingly imbued with the Aryan ideals, Hinduism found little difficulty in eventually claiming him for itself. He was accepted, like Rama and Krishna, as a later Descent of Vishnu himself.

And what, exactly, was the message of the Buddha? Whenever his own disciples or their rivals approached him and tried to draw him into a theoretical discussion about the burning

questions of the day — is the world eternal or not eternal, is it infinite or finite, are soul and body identical or separate, is there life after death for one who has become fully enlightened? — he refused to answer. To one such inquirer he replied, "The religious life does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal; nor does the religious life depend on the dogma that the world is not eternal. There still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair, for the extinction of which in the present life I am prescribing."

On another occasion he picked up a handful of leaves and asked the assembled monks which were greater in number, the leaves in his hand or those in the grove. "The leaves in the grove," answered the monks. "Just so," he replied, "those things that I know, but have not revealed, are greater by far in number than those things that I have revealed. And why, brethren, have I not revealed them? Because they are not concerned with the holy life, they do not lead to Nirvana."

It was the living of the holy life that was the center of his teachings. With or without God, quite apart from the idea of the Atman, regardless of the reality or otherwise of the soul, of the permanence or impermanence of the world, the holy life was to be lived — because it was right, because it was good, because it alone could lead to spiritual knowledge and the extinction of suffering and ignorance.

So he taught men to understand the three hindrances to enlightenment — lust, greed and delusion. He taught them to recognize the nine fetters of the mind — covetousness, ill will, anger, deceitfulness, jealousy, obstinacy, arrogance, vainglory, heedlessness. He taught them to strive after the ten perfections of character — generosity, goodness, renunciation, wisdom, firmness, patience, truthfulness, resolution, kindness and equanimity. By his own life, and by his stories and parables, he showed them how all beings, even the animals, are capable of noble self-sacrifice. He taught them to be gentle and courteous to all. He

made them feel his love. He encouraged their striving by his patience. Even after two thousand five hundred years, his words still ring with noble truth.

"O ye monks, like as the great ocean has but one savor, the savor of salt, so has this religion and order but one, the savor of renunciation."

"Long is the night to him who is awake, long is a mile to him who is tired, long is life to the foolish, who know not the True Law."

"Not by hatred is hatred quenched; by love is it quenched. This is an eternal law."

"Let one overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good, let him overcome greed by liberality, deceit, by truth."

"All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death, remember that you are like unto them, and do not kill nor cause slaughter."

"The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of oneself is difficult to perceive. A man winnows his neighbor's fault like chaff, but his own fault he hides."

"Better than matted hair and ashes are truth and discipline."

## CHAPTER VI

### *The First Indian Empire*

WHILE SIDDHARTHA GOTAMA was still a young man, certain events were happening away in the north-western corner of India and beyond, about which he certainly knew nothing. Perhaps he would not have cared, even if he had known anything about them. Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenian Dynasty in Persia, was laying the foundations of the mightiest empire the world had yet seen. After absorbing Media, Lydia, the Ionian Greek settlements of Asia Minor, Babylonia and Bactria, Cyrus led his Iranians to the Indian border, but it is uncertain whether he advanced as far as the Indus.

Herodotus, born as a Persian subject in Asia Minor in 484 B.C., is vague on the subject. He merely says, "Cyrus in person subjugated the upper regions of Asia, conquering every nation without passing one by." But when Darius I came to the throne in 522 B.C., he promptly removed any ambiguity about the Indian domain. Early in his reign he annexed the territory of the Punjab and Sind. In two of his famous rock-cut inscriptions, the Indus country is clearly named as forming part of the great Persian Empire. It constituted the twentieth satrapy, and contributed one third of the total revenues of the Persian Empire, to which it paid annual tribute in gold dust equal to ten tons in weight. From the time of Darius, northwestern India remained loosely attached to the Persian Empire until the Achaemenian Dynasty was extinguished by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C.

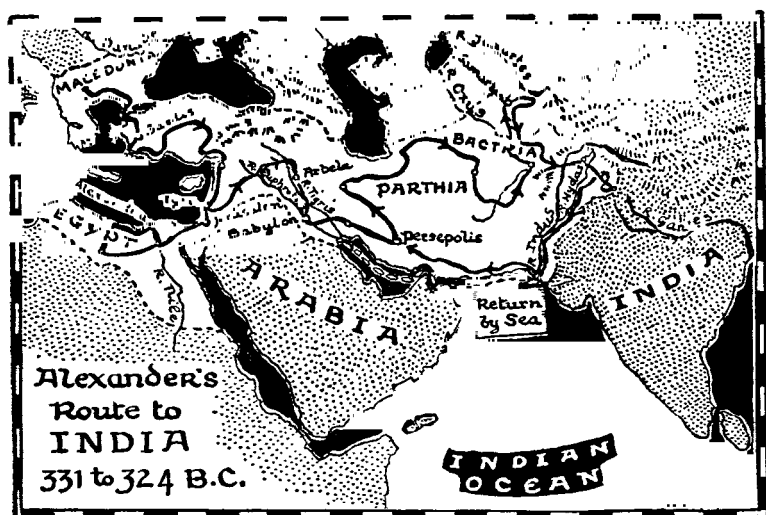
Darius, among other things, sent a naval expedition to explore the Indus and find a new sea route to the west. The expedition was put under the command of a Greek captain named Skylax.

The fleet was assembled on the upper reaches of the Indus in the Gandhara country. It sailed down to the Indian Ocean, westward around Arabia and up the Red Sea to Arsinoë, now known as Suez, which was reached two and a half years after Skylax had first embarked on his bold enterprise. His own lost account of the expedition, surviving in fragmentary quotations, appears to have been the first book by a Greek author dealing with India.

The organizing genius of Darius made itself felt throughout the whole of his vast territory. He divided his empire for purposes of administration into satrapies, with a satrap, or viceroy, at the head of each province. The headquarters of the Indian satrapy was Takshasila, called Taxila by the Greeks. The extensive ruins of this city lie ten miles from Rawalpindi, in the Punjab. In early Buddhist literature, it acquired fame for its great university, to which princely youths were sent even from faraway Benares, to be trained in the Vedas, military science and medicine.

To facilitate administration and trade during his rule, Darius introduced a new script into northwestern India, in addition to the Brahmi already current. The new script was derived from the Aramaic script then in wide use throughout the Persian Empire. Like all Semitic scripts — but unlike the Indian Brahmi — it was written from right to left. The Kharoshthi form of writing gradually spread from India to central Asia, where it was still in use as late as the fifth century A.D. Persia's gold and silver coins also found their way into northwest India through the same channels.

Each province of the Persian Empire was expected to raise levies for the imperial army in time of war and the Indian province was no exception. Indian mercenaries marched with the expedition of Darius against Greece, and were doubtless present at the fateful battle of Marathon in 490 B.C. They also took part in the second Persian campaign against Greece under Xerxes, successor to Darius. They were again present on the battlefield at Arbela, near Nineveh, when Darius III, last of the



Achaemenians, was routed by Alexander. Herodotus says Indian soldiers were dressed in cotton and carried bows of cane and arrows tipped with iron. Indian contingents consisted mainly of light infantry, but there were also divisions of cavalry, elephants and chariots, and the chariots are said to have been drawn by wild asses as well as by horses. Fierce Indian hunting dogs, it seems, also went along to Europe with the Persian armies.

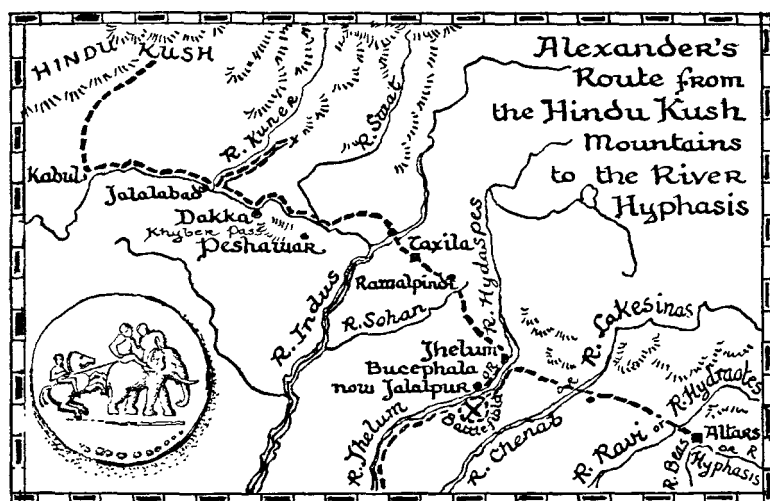
India and Greece first heard of each other through Persia, but no direct connection was established until Alexander and his Macedonians successfully challenged the might of Persia towards the end of the fourth century B.C. Then the part of India which formed the easternmost province of the Persian Empire quickly felt the sting of the Macedonian victory.

Alexander's raid into India, in 326 B.C., when he was just thirty years old, was certainly an extraordinary feat. He set out from Greece with an army of 30,000 to 40,000 men. Within four years he had conquered all the important cities and strongholds of Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, and had advanced deep into the heart of the mighty Persian Empire, finally defeating Darius III at Arbela.

Then, once more trailing over the Hindu Kush, Alexander

crushed all the independent Indian hill tribes who attempted resistance. Early in the spring of 326 B.C., he crossed the Indus above Attock and entered the Punjab. He met with no immediate opposition. For reasons of his own, Ambhi, the raja of Taxila, greeted him with presents and flattery, welcoming him to Taxila as an honored guest. He even offered to supply Alexander with 5000 Indian soldiers, to add to his polyglot army of Balkans, Thracians, Ionian Greeks, Cypriots, Cretans, Phoenicians, Egyptians, and Parthians from central Asia — but mainly, of course, Macedonian veterans trained in a hundred battles. To India, they all became simply Yavanas, or Yonas — Ionians — the kind of Greeks hitherto best known to the Persians.

Ambhi's pliability was not inspired by love of Alexander, but fear of the powerful neighbor to the east whose name has come down in the form the Greeks gave it, Poros. Alexander might be utilized for the possible destruction of Poros. When Alexander imperiously summoned all the Indian princes to meet him at Taxila, Poros replied that he would indeed meet him — but on the borders of his own territory and in arms! Alexander had boats transported overland in sections from the Indus and put together again on the Jhelum, in full sight of Poros and his army, encamped on the opposite bank. The rainy season had begun, and the river was in high flood. On a certain stormy night Alexander and a small picked force rode upstream twenty miles. At dawn, before the alarm could be brought to the camp of Poros, he and his generals, 11,000 men and the cavalry horses, all managed to cross to the other side. Poros had superiority in war chariots and elephants, but the Parthians, shooting with deadly aim as they galloped, bore down in a surprise attack, and they were followed by the famous Macedonian cavalry, with Alexander himself at their head. The unwieldy chariots were soon bogged down in the mud, and the elephants stampeded backwards instead of forwards. Poros, mounted on a great elephant, was severely wounded during the general carnage. Brought into the presence of Alexander, he was asked how he



should be treated. "Act like a king," he replied haughtily. Alexander, who seldom showed magnanimity to a defeated foe, was impressed. He reinstated Poros in possession of his former territory, and even increased it later on, at the expense of other Indian states.

Alexander continued his march eastward until he reached the Beas, last but one of the five rivers of the Indus system. Eighty miles ahead lay the Sutlej, and beyond that, with only a narrow strip of desert between, stretched another great Indian river system, that of the Ganges. Alexander by this time had heard of the rich eastern kingdom of Magadha, now with its capital at Pataliputra, or Patna. Confident as ever of victory, he dreamed of advancing all the way to the Eastern Ocean — wherever that was — making the whole of India his prize. This was the moment when his army rebelled.

On the march through Afghanistan, Bactria and Sogdiana, as well as at points along the Indian rivers, Alexander had already busied himself in laying out a string of new cities. In these he forcibly planted Thracian and Macedonian garrisons to protect the little colonies of Europeans left behind in each. The soldiers did not like being left, and murmurings of discontent were

steadily growing. At last, the war-weary Macedonians, 3000 miles from home, flatly refused to go one step farther, and Alexander reluctantly gave in. After building twelve great altars to mark his farthest advance — they must have been constructed along the Beas not far from Amritsar — he ordered retreat, back to the Ravi, to the Chenab, to the Jhelum. There, prompted no doubt by Skylax's feat two centuries earlier, Alexander suddenly made up his mind to sail down the Indus to the Indian Ocean. The Macedonian Eudamus was ordered to remain behind as commander of the garrisoned European colonies. Another Macedonian, named Philip, was installed as Greek satrap in Afghanistan. Ambhi and Poros, finally reconciled, and Abhisara of Kashmir, were appointed satraps in northwest India. Other small neighboring states, previously ruled by their own kings or exercising the republican form of government, were compelled to accept the overlordship of these three.

Alexander's armada, consisting of about a thousand boats collected or built in India, was entrusted to the Cretan Nearchus. Some eight thousand of the troops, several thousand horses and quantities of supplies were embarked. The remainder of the army marched in two detachments along either bank. Alexander stood up in the prow of his vessel, piloted by Onesikritus, a former pupil of Diogenes, and solemnly poured libations to the Indian rivers and to the Greek and Egyptian gods, while crowds of Indians on shore danced and sang with wild joy, speeding the Yavana departure.

But progress downstream was not all smooth sailing. In the Malava country, near the junction of the Jhelum and the Ravi, Alexander very nearly lost his life. With only a handful of companions, and more courage than sense, he scaled the wall of a Malava citadel and jumped down inside, before his besieging force could break open the gates from without. He was badly wounded, but took his revenge by having all the inhabitants of the town, without an exception, put to death. Along the lower course of the Indus, in the "country of the Brahmins," the

Yavanas encountered bitter hostility. "These Brahmin philosophers," afterwards wrote Plutarch, in his biography of Alexander, "reviled the princes who declared for him, and encouraged the free states to revolt from his authority. On this account he hanged many of them." But eventually Alexander reached the Indian Ocean, where he again poured forth libations



### Alexander the Great

to Poseidon. The newly conquered province of Sind was handed over to Pithon, one of the Macedonians. Then, after having spent just nineteen months in India, Alexander and one section of the army set out overland for Persia by way of the terrible Makran Desert, leaving Nearchus and the fleet to continue their more leisurely way up the Persian Gulf.

Two years after his departure from India, Alexander was dead in Babylon. His satrap in Afghanistan, Philip, was murdered in India during a mutiny of the Greek mercenaries. Eudamus considered the time propitious for getting rid of Poros and had him treacherously killed. Then Pithon and Eudamus and most of the Macedonian garrisons hurriedly deserted their posts, to join in the general scramble for spoils in western Asia. Revolt in the Punjab spread rapidly, as first one and then another Indian state or tribe rose and threw off the hated foreign yoke.

To the Greeks, India was essentially a land of marvels and in

pursuit of these they missed the greater depth of Indian life. As a boy, Alexander had Aristotle for a tutor, whose all-embracing interests profoundly marked his youthful mind. Among the companions who accompanied him to India were surveyors, city planners, geographers, historians and philosophers, as well as able Macedonian soldiers like Ptolemy, afterwards king of Egypt, and Seleukus, inheritor of the Asiatic conquests. At least four of these men — Ptolemy, Nearchus, Onesikritus and Aristobulus — wrote books about their Indian experiences, which were drawn upon freely by all the later classical Greek and Roman authors.

Climate, the vastness of the rivers, the tides, the strange animals and plants, the manners and customs of the people, the political institutions, the peculiar religious and philosophic ideas, all were commented upon with naïve interest by the foreigners. They admired the “vegetable wool” of India (cotton), finer and softer than sheep’s wool, the “honey-bearing reeds” (sugar cane) and the trees that sent down branches that rooted and became new trunks (the banyan). Like all tourists, they were fascinated by pythons, monkeys and elephants. Elephants, they reported, were so intelligent and teachable that they could actually learn to sew, and there were huge ants as big as foxes trained for gold digging! Nearchus was struck by the cleverness of certain Indians who immediately produced excellent imitations, made from dyed wool, of the sponges used by Macedonians, and he was also impressed by the fact that for letter writing, Indians made use of closely woven cloth. Aristobulus took note of the point that anybody who discovered a new poison and revealed it without first making known the antidote was put to death in India.

One of the famous Greek anecdotes preserves the story of a meeting between Onesikritus and fifteen naked ascetics — probably Jains — at Taxila. Alexander saw some of these men in the street and sent Onesikritus to say that he would like to inquire of them about their wisdom. The fifteen ascetics were finally

located ten miles from Taxila, sitting naked and motionless on the burning rocks under the blistering sun. Onesikritus duly delivered Alexander's message through a series of three interpreters, but with scant courtesy was informed that no one wearing European clothes could possibly learn this wisdom! To do that, one must sit naked on the hot stones beside them. Moreover, they added, an attempt to learn this wisdom through three interpreters was as futile as trying to get clear water through mud. On the other hand, they themselves inquired about the conclusions of Greek philosophy, and were told about Pythagoras, Socrates and Diogenes. One of them, Kalyana, was later persuaded by Ambhi, the raja of Taxila, much to the scorn of the others, to accompany Alexander when he left India. Strabo and Arrian both describe his strange end at Babylon. Suddenly he announced that he intended to commit suicide, and nothing could dissuade him. While the Greek trumpets sounded and the Greek soldiers stood watching, with mingled horror and disgust, Kalyana calmly climbed upon a huge pyre, sat down cross-legged in the prescribed posture of the *yogi*, and in motionless serenity allowed the flames to consume him.

Alexander's meteoric flash across the Indian sky, so impressive to the Greeks, meant almost nothing to India. His name is not even mentioned in the whole of contemporary Indian literature, and the only early reference to him is an indirect one, found in the Pali *Mahavamsa* of Ceylon belonging to the fifth century A.D., though this work is based on an older chronicle which has disappeared. According to the *Mahavamsa*, when the Great Stupa near Anuradhapura was to be dedicated in 137 B.C., monks came to attend the ceremony from all over India, including 30,000 monks from "Alasanda, city of the Yonas." Exactly which "Alexandria-of-the-Greeks" is meant is not clear. Alexander had a flair for founding Alexandrias, in honor of himself and, starting with Alexandria in Egypt, he built altogether seventeen of them. The Buddhist monks probably came from one of Alexander's Greek trading posts in Afghanistan or northwest India.

But if India as a whole was singularly indifferent to the Greeks, there was one ambitious young man, then an exile at Taxila from the Magadha court of Pataliputra, who watched the Yavana advance with shrewd interest and on whom the lessons of the superior Greek tactics and military strategy were certainly not lost. He was shortly to become known as Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the first real Indian Empire.

Chandragupta's ancestry and early history are hazy. He has been called an upstart, and he has also been called a scion of the Nanda family of Magadha. He probably originally held an important post in the Magadha army. The Saisunaga Dynasty, which replaced the line of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru, gave way in 413 B.C. to the dynasty of the Nandas. Already in the time of Ajatasatru, Magadha had begun to expand at the expense of its neighbors. It absorbed Anga (western Bengal), the Lichavi territory and the powerful kingdom of Kosala, which had itself just absorbed Kapilavastu and perhaps Kasi as well. Under the Saisunaga kings, the rival power of Avanti to the southwest, with its capital at Ujjain, was also destroyed. When the Nandas succeeded in overthrowing the Saisunagas, they became heirs to the wealthiest and the most important kingdom of India. Nevertheless the Nanda king who was on the throne when the Greeks first reached India was described to Alexander by Poros and others as of "low birth and mean disposition." It was even asserted that he was the son of a Nanda queen by her barber paramour.

This was the Nanda against whom Chandragupta fomented rebellion. When it failed, he was compelled to flee to Taxila, and there he fell in with the astute Brahmin Chanakya, also known as Kautilya, who himself had some sort of grievance against the Nanda court. It is just possible that Chandragupta met Alexander in Taxila, and that it was he who urged him to invade Magadha. Two or three years later, when news reached India of Alexander's death in Babylon, Chandragupta hastened to make an alliance with Kautilya and quickly placed himself at

the head of the Indian revolt in the Punjab. After exterminating what remained of the Greek garrisons there, he set off with a good-sized army for Pataliputra. The unpopular Nanda was overthrown and murdered, and in 321 B.C. Chandragupta became the first king of the new Mauryan Dynasty, with its new type of Indian imperialism. His forces in Magadha were raised to huge proportions, and it is said that he maintained a standing army of 30,000 horses, 600,000 infantry, 8000 chariots and 9000 elephants. No power in India was capable of contending with such a force. The whole of northern India was soon brought under the sway of a strong central government, and Pataliputra became, in effect, the national capital.

Chandragupta presently had an opportunity to show just how strong he was. In 305 B.C., Seleukus, who had obtained the lion's share of Alexander's Asiatic conquests, foolishly imagined that he could repeat Alexander's exploits and regain for himself the Indian provinces which had revolted. He was promptly disillusioned. Chandragupta's victory was so complete that Seleukus not only hastily withdrew all the way to Syria (where he founded the new capital of Antioch), but in token of his defeat gave his daughter in marriage to Chandragupta and handed over, by way of dowry, Baluchistan and a good part of Afghanistan. In exchange, Chandragupta gave only five hundred elephants. The Hindu Kush now became the boundary between the Indian empire of Chandragupta and the Asiatic empire of Seleukus.

Most of what is known about the Mauryan Empire during the reign of Chandragupta comes from Megasthenes, Greek ambassador from Seleukus, who arrived in Pataliputra in 302 B.C. and remained for many years, or from Kautilya's manual of statecraft, the *Artha Shastra*. Though frequently referred to in early Sanskrit works dealing with government, it was only in the present century that a complete manuscript copy of the *Artha Shastra* finally turned up, along with twelve other old manuscripts, in the library of the Maharaja of Travancore in southern India.

As described by these authors, the Mauryan capital, originally a fortress camp built by Ajatasatru at the meeting place of two rivers, the Sone and the Ganges, was indeed a handsome city. It lay twelve miles above the site of its successor, the modern Patna. Nine miles long and a mile and a half wide, Pataliputra was surrounded by a heavy wooden palisade guarded by more than five hundred watchtowers and pierced by sixty-four gates. A moat two hundred yards wide and sixty feet deep provided both security and drainage. Outside the city, a hundred bow-lengths away, were sacred groves for ascetics and resthouses for travelers, and beyond these were the public burial and cremation grounds. Parts of the ancient teakwood rampart of Pataliputra and of caissons, or platforms, sunk deep into the ground to give the necessary strength for buildings, have been discovered. Megasthenes explains that Indian river cities were always built of wood, which was less subject to damage during the annual floods than sun-dried mud bricks.

Chandragupta's wooden palace, set in a spacious garden with fountains and ponds filled with fish, once occupied the center of the city. It had many pillared halls, and Megasthenes, who had certainly visited Persia, thought it more magnificent than the famous royal palaces of Susa and Ekbatana. The tall pillars were encased with flowering vines worked out in gold and silver, after the fashion of the silver-plated cypress pillars of the Persian palaces, but more ornate. Very possibly Chandragupta had heard of the skill of the Persian craftsmen at Taxila and later, when he built his own palace at Pataliputra, encouraged his workmen to attempt even finer things. The quantities of royal vessels made of gold, silver and copper, many of huge size and richly studded with precious stones, filled the Greek envoy with amazement.

The city was divided by two wide cross streets into quarters, on the traditional Indo-Aryan plan, and houses were two and three stories high. Kautilya says that Brahmins and some of the more honorable craftsmen, such as armorers and workers in

precious stones, were assigned to the northern quarter. Kshatriyas and merchants dealing in grains, scents and garlands occupied the eastern quarter. Sudras lived in the western quarter. Kautilya does not make a clear statement about the southern quarter. Each quarter had a temple dedicated to its guardian deity. Guildhalls were erected at the corners of the city, and in the northwestern section were located the bazaars and hospitals, the latter being supplied with medicinal herbs. Megasthenes notes the general fondness of the people for bright colors and delicate flowered materials, and for jewels and gold ornaments. When the better class of citizens went abroad, they were accompanied by attendants who carried umbrellas or parasols.

The danger of fire in a city of wood, like Pataliputra, must always have been great, and very elaborate provisions for fire fighting are recounted by Kautilya. There was a well for every ten houses. No thatched roofs were permitted within the city limits. Vessels filled with water had to be kept in readiness along the main streets and in front of the palace. Every householder was required to have ladders, leather water bags and other fire-fighting equipment on hand. Fines were imposed for carelessness in starting a fire and for failure to run to the assistance of any neighbor in whose house a fire had broken out. For arson, the penalty was extremely severe. A person guilty of this crime could be thrown into the fire of his own making.

Chandragupta, in his late years, seems to have lived a secluded life within the palace. During the day he heard reports and petitions, passed sentences, attended to matters of finance and defense, and listened to the confidential reports of his secret agents and spies. But he seldom appeared in public, except to review the army, to go hunting in the royal forest preserve or to hold public audience once a year on the occasion of his birthday anniversary. This important day was marked by a ceremonial public washing of the royal hair. He may also have watched at times the popular court gambling amusements — chariot racing and

combats between rhinoceroses, elephants, rams or bulls. Interest in these was intensified by much betting.

Megasthenes states that a strange bodyguard of armed foreign Amazons was always in attendance upon the Mauryan king, and was even present in his sleeping quarters. A few centuries later, Greek girls appeared on lists of commercial imports into India, and the "Yavana Guard" soon became a feature common to the court of many an Indian prince. Chandragupta evidently wore his imperial crown none too easily. Constant care was taken lest he be poisoned, and special servants were employed to taste both food and medicine before they were offered to him. It is said that the king even changed his sleeping apartment every night.

Tradition says that Chandragupta renounced his throne at this time and joined Bhadrabahu, the Jain sage, at Belgola in south India, where eventually he slowly starved himself to death, in the way permitted to a Jain monk after he has completed twelve full years of ascetic discipline.

The Mauryan government, doubtless organized by the highly intelligent but coldly calculating Kautilya, as chief minister, seems to have been extraordinarily efficient, though the system of justice, which permitted torture both for extracting confessions and punishing, was considered harsh by the Greeks. Chandragupta knew well that the safety of the empire depended in the first instance upon the army. His war office was divided into six departments, each placed in charge of five key men. Four departments were responsible respectively for the four traditional branches of the Indian army — infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants. The fifth department looked after proper coordination between army and navy, and the sixth handled the transport, commissariat and menial services. There was even a "Red Cross" and "Ambulance Service" for active war duty. Surgeons, with instruments, medicines and dressings, were in attendance in the rear of the battlefields, and women provided food and beverages for the wounded at first-aid stations.

The finances of the empire were drawn from varied sources. Agriculture paid the usual one sixth to the state, and fishermen handed over one sixth of their catch. The Crown Lands, reserved as the king's property, yielded a substantial income. Salt was a monopoly of the government. Other income was derived from the working and leasing of mines and pearl fisheries, taxes on gambling and drink, a sales tax, fines, ferry dues and hire taken on government ships plying the rivers and coastal waters and making regular journeys to countries like Persia, Arabia, Burma, Ceylon and the more distant islands, and possibly even to China. For general revenue purposes, villages under the Mauryan Empire were divided into three classes. To the first belonged the important religious and educational centers, which were tax-free. In the second class were villages contributing soldiers to the army and therefore exempted from further taxation. Other villages paid taxes, as previously agreed upon, in gold, grain, cattle, dairy produce, manufactured goods or free labor for public works. Registers were kept for all citizens, showing occupation, caste, income, livestock owned and number of servants employed, and the tax payable.

Supreme administration of the empire was vested in Chandragupta as king and his council of ministers, normally eight in number. High officials were appointed to the control of departments such as army, justice, finance, religion, foreign affairs, irrigation, public roads, prisons, the mint, parks and agriculture. The empire itself was divided into provinces under viceroys. Kautilya candidly analyzes the problem of royal princes, who may be tempted to try to gain the throne for themselves. He recommends that they should be kept at a safe distance from the capital, and suggests that the best way to dispose of them is to make them provincial viceroys.

Roads and irrigation received constant attention and support from the Mauryan empire-builders. India, too, now had its Royal Road, 1200 miles long, modeled after the Persian road. It extended from the frontier beyond Taxila to Pataliputra. Megas-

thenes says it was marked with a pillar at every *stadia*, that is, every mile and one eighth. The road, which was sixty-four feet wide, was planted with trees, and at regular intervals were wells, post and police stations and hostels for travelers. Imperial officers were charged with looking after it, and the towns and villages through which it passed had to maintain it in good condition. Fines were imposed on anyone damaging the road or causing obstruction to traffic.

Public irrigation works were also well organized in the Mauryan Empire. Water rates and the matter of fair distribution of water from canals were under strict government control. An ancient inscription at Girnar, in Kathiawar, pays tribute to one of Chandragupta's provincial governors, who first dammed up a lake in that region. This irrigation project was enlarged and kept in repair for eight hundred years.

The affairs of Pataliputra itself were subject to minute supervision, and probably the same general rules were enforced in all the provincial capitals and large towns. There was a municipal board of thirty members, and there were six city departments. The first dealt with handicrafts, wages and fraud. The second supervised strangers, passports and lodging arrangements, and also provided medical assistance for foreigners and in the event of their death saw that they were buried and that their effects were sent back to their relatives. The third department was responsible for keeping a register of births and deaths. The fourth controlled retail trade and issued licenses. The fifth handled manufactures. The sixth collected the municipal tax of 10 per cent on bazaar sales.

Regulations in connection with drink and gambling were very strict. Taverns must be decent, and to this end they were required to have suitable furnishings, including such amenities as scents and flowers. A special officer was to be on hand to note how much the patrons habitually drank and to impose a special penalty on any Brahmins caught indulging in liquor. The value of the jewelry of intoxicated persons was to be carefully written

down, and the tavern keeper himself had to make good the loss in case of any thefts. Gambling was licensed on the basis of 5 per cent of the profits for the state. The dice were supplied by a regular official who was expected to watch the games and see that fair play was observed.

Megasthenes, as a cultured Greek gentleman, was naturally interested in some of the intellectual and philosophic aspects of life at the Mauryan capital at the close of the fourth century B.C. Like other Greeks, he was not very clear about the gods worshipped in India. He confused them with Greek gods, identifying Shiva with Dionysos and Krishna with Herakles. Nor did he know the difference between Buddhists and Jains or other forest recluses. Yet he has given a revealing glimpse of a religious grove outside Pataliputra, where ascetics and monks were to be found "living sparsely, practising celibacy and abstinence from flesh-food, and listening to grave discourse." The chief subject of conversation, it seems, was death. "For this present life, they hold, is like the season passed in the womb, and death for those who have cultivated philosophy is the birth into the real, the happy life." Megasthenes perhaps saw things too idealistically when he wrote, "No Indian has ever been convicted of lying," but his testimony that witnesses and seals were unnecessary, and that there was almost no litigation among Indians at that time, is significant.

Kautilya, on the other hand, cannot be accused of oversimplification. He describes at length forty different methods of embezzlement, and complains that it is as hard to find out guilty officials as to discover whether fishes in a stream are drinking or not. Chandragupta's sinister spy system was considered next to the army in importance; it was based on the assumption that everybody, ministers as well as the general population, was to be regarded with suspicion and kept constantly under watch. Battalions of spies were employed. Information was to be obtained from public women, bazaars, taverns, the "four corners" of streets. News writers were employed to make regular reports,

often by secret code, to a central bureau of information. Carrier pigeons brought urgent messages from distant parts of the empire. For the disposal of proved or suspected enemies, Kautilya gives a long list of poisons, which it was the duty of the official poison-mixers to administer. There were lingering poisons, instantaneous poisons, poisons which would take effect in just the requisite number of days or weeks. The *Artha Shastra* considers the subject so important that it devotes a whole chapter to poisons, and Kautilya has no qualms in freely recommending their use. The king must rule with a firm hand, and his subjects must be made to fear him.

Chandragupta's son and successor, Bindusara, probably came to the Mauryan throne in or about 296 B.C. Like his father, he engaged in successful military campaigns, and he also kept up relations with some of the Greek rulers in Asia and Africa. A new Greek ambassador arrived at Pataliputra from the Syrian court, and Ptolemy Philadelphus, son of Alexander's old general, sent a special envoy from Egypt. The Greek accounts refer to an amusing correspondence carried on between Bindusara and Antiochus, who by this time had succeeded Seleukus. The Mauryan ruler asked for a sample of Greek wine, some figs and a philosopher, and wrote that he was willing to pay a good price for the latter. Antiochus replied that he took pleasure in sending the wine and the figs, but that among the Greeks it was not considered exactly good form to trade in philosophers. The only other fact known about Bindusara is that he married a lady from Champa, in other words, a Bengali, who became the mother of his son, the great Asoka.

The third Mauryan emperor was not only one of the greatest rulers the world has ever known, but one of its greatest men. His own words still tell us much of what he did and thought and was. For with noble purpose and transparent sincerity, Asoka composed, and then had engraved on boulders, rocks and monolithic pillars in various parts of the empire, a series of royal edicts

and messages, embodying his laws, detailing many of his deeds and expressing his hopes and prayers for both the material and spiritual well-being of his subjects. Ten such pillars are still standing in a good state, and fragments of at least twenty more have been found, one fragment having been made ready for use as a roller in a sugar press! Eighteen inscribed rocks have so far come to light in different parts of India between the North-west Frontier Province and Madras. The five thousand words of the inscriptions are a model of condensation, yet as they chiseled the Pali texts with neat small strokes, the ancient engravers unconsciously wrote down more than they knew. They recorded the virtues of their emperor — his truthfulness, kindness, personal humility, piety, tolerance and administrative capacities. India is justly proud of her great Asoka. Few, if any, have been his equal.

Though the inscriptions give authentic firsthand knowledge of Asoka and the India of his day, picturesque additions appear in the somewhat later Ceylonese Chronicles and in the many Buddhist legends in Pali, Sanskrit and Chinese. For example, there is the story of how the Bodhisattva, before the enlightenment, passing one day on his accustomed begging round, met a child playing in the road. The child looked up at the benign countenance and felt a quivering of love. Having nothing else to offer, he scooped up a handful of dust and innocently dropped it into the begging bowl of the Blessed One, who smiled and passed on. That child was afterwards reborn as Asoka Priyadasi, Beloved-of-the-gods. Another legend recounts how Asoka, after the death of his principal queen, Asandhimitra, married Tishyarakshita, a young and vain woman, jealous and vengeful by disposition. She could not abide Asoka's love and reverence for the sacred Bodhi tree, and by an evil spell she caused it to sicken and droop. When word of this was brought to Asoka, he hastened to Bodh-Gaya, filled with grief and anxiety, and miraculously revived the holy tree by pouring perfumed water over

its roots. This scene has been charmingly depicted on one of the magnificent gateways of the Sanchi Stupa, in central Asia, which dates from the first century B.C.

Other legends tell how Tishyarakshita, whose very nature was evil, before long fell in love with the beautiful eyes of Prince Kunala, Asoka's eldest son. When he repelled her shameful advances, she plotted a horrible revenge. She addressed a letter to the commander of the army at Taxila, where Kunala was then serving as viceroy, and sealed it with the royal seal, obtained by stealth. Kunala was accused of conspiring against Asoka's life, and the commander was ordered immediately to seize and blind the prince. A large ruined stupa is still to be seen crowning a hill near Taxila. It is popularly known as the Kunala Stupa, and here, tradition says, Asoka built the first stupa, to commemorate the spot where Kunala was blinded at the instigation of his wicked stepmother.

Bindusara died in 274 B.C. At this time, Asoka was serving as viceroy at Ujjain, one of the famous cities of ancient India, equally noted for its wealth and its intellectual brilliance. He had previously served his apprenticeship as viceroy at Taxila also, thus showing that Kautilya's advice to Chandragupta that royal princes should be kept at a distance from the capital was taken seriously by the Mauryas. The coronation ceremony of Asoka, according to the inscriptions, did not take place until four years after he had actually begun to reign. The reason for the delay is not stated, but as he had many brothers it has been suggested that the succession may have been contested. In the twelfth year of his reign, Asoka fought his one and only war of aggression. This was the war against Kalinga, the country extending southward along the Bay of Bengal and comprising what is now Orissa and the northern part of Madras. It was inhabited by a number of forest tribes, and was a state of no mean strength, having an army of 60,000 foot soldiers, 1000 horses and 700 elephants. Against this force, Asoka launched the mighty Mauryan army. In his own words, 100,000 Kalingas were slain, 150,-

ooo others were borne away as captives, and countless more perished from famine and disease. The conquest of Kalinga brought no joy to Asoka. Instead, he records that he was filled with remorse. He became a lay member of the Buddhist Sangha, and from this time forth publicly renounced war and all conquest by force.

Other notable events of his long reign of forty years were a grand tour of the Buddhist holy places, including a visit to Lumbini, the birthplace of the Blessed One, the calling of the Third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra, and his dispatch of missionaries to the kingdoms of the Cholas and Pandyas at the southern extremity of the peninsula, to Kashmir and Gandhara in the north, to Visvamasī, king of the Huns, and even to countries in the west, far beyond the borders of India.

One of the Asokan Rock Edicts names five Greek kings to whom emissaries were dispatched — Antiochus of Syria (the half-Persian son of Seleukus), Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Corinth. It was only between 261 and 258 B.C. that all of them were living at once, and it must have been within these years that the Indian missionaries were sent to the Greek courts. Asoka is also credited with having founded two important cities, Srinagar in Kashmir and Lalitā Patan in Nepal.

His later years seem to have been devoted almost entirely to pious works of one kind or another. He is said to have opened seven of the eight stupas in which the relics of the Buddha were originally enshrined, and ordered the building of thousands of new stupas for their redistribution to all parts of his empire. He raised a temple round the Bodhi tree at Gaya, and built so many *viharas*, or monasteries, in Magadha that it became known as the vihara country — modern Bihar. Asoka was tolerant and generous in his attitude to all religions, but he made Buddhism the state religion of India, and on account of his royal patronage it rapidly permeated every part of India, and then passed over the mountains and across the seas to many foreign lands. Tra-

dition says that Asoka himself was ordained a monk towards the end of his life, though he continued to administer his empire until his death in 232 B.C.

The Mauryan Dynasty did not long survive its greatest ruler. Asoka's grandson Dasaratha succeeded him, and then came several weak kings. The last of them was murdered in 184 B.C. by a Brahmin named Pushyamitra, who was commander of the army. Chandragupta, founder of the Mauryan line, had risen to power by murdering the last Nanda king. By a curious twist of fate, his own dynasty, after lasting less than 150 years, was likewise brought to an end by violence.

The famous Asokan Edicts carved on the Indian rocks and pillars are autobiographical statements, administrative orders and provisions, and exhortations addressed to both the state officials and the people in general. There are two principal series, one on natural rocks and the other on sandstone pillars. Among detached inscriptions found elsewhere is a dedication of the Barabar caves near Gaya, excavated for the use of hermits of the Ajivika sect founded by a rival of Mahavira. Like the Buddha, Asoka deliberately chose to make use of Prakrit instead of Sanskrit for his inscriptions, but scholars have disentangled two scripts and three separate dialects employed by him. Two rocks in northwest India — one near Peshawar and the other on the road to Kashmir, not far from Rawalpindi — bear inscriptions in Kharoshthi. All the others, however, are in the Brahmi alphabet. It was James Prinsep, assay master of the Calcutta Mint, who a century ago first succeeded in deciphering both these scripts. He and Charles Masson got hold of the key to Kharoshthi with the help of bilingual legends in Greek and Kharoshthi on Indo-Bactrian coins, but Prinsep alone, without any bilingual aid, discovered the secret of Brahmi.

The great emperor's simple personal confessions are a human document of rare charm and high moral significance. In the edict on the Kalinga conquest, Asoka humbly records that "If a hundredth, nay, a thousandth part of the persons who were

then slain, carried away captive or done to death were now to suffer the same fate, it would be a matter of remorse to His Majesty." Renouncing war, he declares that "The conquest of the Law alone is a conquest of delight," and that from now on he intends to substitute the Drum of the Law of Piety for the drums of war throughout the land. Such are the reactions of India's saintly emperor to his victorious campaign! By contrast, how fearful are the sentiments aroused by victory in the breast of the Assyrian king, Assurnazirpal II, before Asoka's time: "One out of every two did I slay; I built a wall before the gates of the city; I flayed the chiefs alive and covered the wall with their skin. Some of them were walled up alive in the masonry, others were impaled along the wall . . . I had a large number of them flayed in my presence . . . As I stand on the ruins, my face beams with gladness. In the sating of my wrath, I find satisfaction." Buddhist ideals of compassion certainly softened the heart and taught mercy for all living things.

After his conversion, Asoka tried by progressive steps to discourage and ultimately to stop the slaughter of animals, for any reason whatever, throughout the empire. First, he himself abandoned the royal hunt and recommended, as a better form of amusement, pilgrimages, religious processions and edifying spectacles. Next, he himself cut down the supply of meat and game for the royal kitchens. At one time thousands of animals were killed daily. Then the number was reduced to two peacocks and one deer a day, and finally even these were given up, as an example to his subjects. Animal sacrifices in the capital were strictly forbidden, and the killing of a long list of creatures, including such an odd assortment as parrots, lizards and queen ants, was also prohibited. It is interesting that cows are not referred to in this list, and that apparently they had not yet become the sacred animal of a later day. A closed season was declared for certain animals, and fish were not to be caught or sold on a fixed number of days in the week. Branding and castration of animals were forbidden. Nor were animals forgotten in the

general provisions for comfort set up along all the public roads. In the words of the inscription: "Banyans were planted to give shade to cattle and men; mango-gardens were planted, and at each half *koss* wells were dug; also resthouses were made; many watering stations were also made in this and that place, for the comfort of cattle and men." These were the facts, but behind them was the noble motive. "In truth the King, beloved of the gods, has at heart security for all creatures, respect for life, peace and happiness."

In spite of his tender regard for the life and happiness of all creatures, Asoka did not abolish capital punishment, though he tried to mitigate the harsh punishments of his grandfather Chandragupta's time. He allowed a condemned man three days of grace to make an appeal and to prepare himself for death. He appointed officers to examine cases of prisoners to see that they had not been falsely condemned, and to supply money to their families if they were in need. On the anniversary of his coronation, and on other occasions, an amnesty was granted to certain classes of prisoners and the jail doors were flung open.

In administration, Asoka was no doubt a benevolent autocrat. There is no sign that he believed in democratic institutions, though his concern was for the welfare of his subjects, not the strength of his personal government. He considered all men as his own children, he said, and the happiness of his subjects "in this world and the next" was what he strove for. His governors were to think of themselves as "good nurses." They were to be careful in their conduct, and were to avoid violence, harshness, envy, impatience or idleness. He himself was a model of devotion to duty. "At all times and in all places, whether I am dining or am in the ladies' apartments, in my bedroom or in my closet, in my carriage or in the palace gardens, the official reporters should keep me constantly informed of the people's business, which business of the people I am ready to dispose of at any place." There was no room for rancor or jealousy in his heart. "Although a man does him injury, His Majesty holds

that it must be patiently borne, as far as it possibly can be borne."

Commissioners were to tour their respective areas every five years, inquiring into the grievances and needs of the people, and looking after their spiritual education. Viceroys, including his sons, were to follow the same procedure. "Everywhere in my dominions, the commissioners and the district officers every five years must proceed on tour, not only to execute the ordinary duties but to give instruction in the Law" — the *dharma*, or code of duties to oneself, one's family and society, obligatory for every Aryan. The secret-service department of Chandragupta was transformed into a new service in which "overseers of the Law" were to report on the religious progress of the people. These men were also charged with seeing that all state charities and even private donations from members of the royal family were distributed impartially.

Asoka's tolerance was one of his most outstanding traits. He saw the danger inherent in schisms and sternly urged the members of the Buddhist fraternity to hold together in one body. He also recommended for study six special Buddhist texts. Although the names of these in the Asokan Edicts do not correspond with any recognizable sections of the Pali Canon as it now exists, it is clear that well-known passages of the Buddhist scripture were meant. In spite of his own loyalty to Buddhism, Asoka enjoined upon the people respect for Brahmins, for the followers of all religious sects, for teachers and for elders. Above all, "father and mother must be hearkened to." He advocated freedom of religion for the varied population of his vast empire, representing different levels of cultural development, but insisted that the people must be united in observing moral principles and good manners. "All sects deserve reverence for one reason or another. By thus acting, a man exalts his own sect and at the same time does service to the sects of others." It was not the outward form, in any event, but the spirit that mattered. "His Majesty cares not so much for the show of external reverence as

that there should be a growth of the essence of the matter in all sects."

Thus did Asoka earnestly strive to fulfill the ancient Indian ideal of kingship and the Buddhist ideal of humility and love for all living creatures. Though his name means little in the West, to millions in Asia, down through the centuries, Asoka has stood as one of the highest expressions of noble sentiments, right conduct and enlightened rule.

Asoka was also responsible for a new development in Indian art. It was during his reign that, for the first time, stone came into wide use in India for sculpture and building purposes. Nothing of significance in stone survives from pre-Mauryan or even pre-Asokan times, except a few crude life-size figures of those supernatural beings called Yakshas and Yakshis, found near Patna and Mathura. This does not mean that Indian sculpture was non-existent until the third century B.C., but rather that materials easier to handle and work, like wood, ivory and baked clay, were generally preferred. Then, quite suddenly, in the time of Asoka, royal artisans began to produce works of high merit in stone, such as Asoka's "Pillars of Piety." Stone also made its appearance in architectural monuments.

Whether Asoka copied or adapted his pillars from Persian or Greco-Persian models and imported Persian workmen for their execution, as is sometimes asserted, is debatable, but Greek, Persian and Indian were all of Aryan stock, and if at one period or another of their separate histories they interchanged ideas or cultural influences, there would have been nothing extraordinary about it. Vedic India had the custom of erecting tall poles with a fluttering pennant at the top — a sort of flagstaff — at the site of a sacrificial altar, and poles or columns in front of palaces and temples was a natural development. Asoka simply erected them of stone, and used them as a commanding means of publishing his messages to his people. The Pali inscriptions are always found near the base of the shaft, in a position easily seen.

The Asokan pillars of fine-grained sandstone, varying from

forty to fifty feet in height and weighing about fifty tons, all came out of the Chunar quarries, not far from Benares. They rise abruptly from the ground, without any sort of pedestal. The rounded tapering shaft is perfectly plain but highly polished,



and this glasslike luster is, indeed, the chief characteristic of all Asokan stonework, without exception. The single piece of stone forming the shaft is crowned by a bell-shaped capital (more properly, an inverted lotus-petaled capital) and a round slab, which usually supports a large finely carved animal — elephant, horse, bull or lion — or sometimes the forefronts of a group of lions seated back to back. In the case of the finely executed Lion Pillar at Sarnath, there was a further addition of a great metal

wheel, symbolic of the Buddhist Doctrine, or Law. The symbolism of the animals is uncertain. They may represent the guardian animals of the Four Quarters, or perhaps the elephant suggests the Birth, the horse, the Great Renunciation, and the bull and the lion, the traditional epithets, "Bull among men," "Lion among the Sakyas," applied to the Buddha. In the Lion Pillar at Sarnath, the four animals are carved in relief along the broad edge of the entablature, separated from one another by Buddhist Wheels. As sculpture, this animal portraiture possesses great dignity, especially the magnificent humped Indian bull. The simplicity and beauty of the pillars, quite apart from the inscriptions they bore, must have impressed beholders with a feeling of great awe and reverence.

The feat of moving these great stone pillars long distances and setting them up obviously required technical engineering skill of a high order. They have been found in eastern and central India, as far north as Lumbini in Nepal, and as far west as Rajputana. No doubt they once adorned the main routes of pilgrimages or were placed near important cities, in association with stupas or other sacred structures. A fourteenth-century account, written during the reign of Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlak, describes his removal of one of Asoka's pillars from a point a hundred and fifty miles away to Delhi and its re-erection there as a trophy of victory. Perhaps the same methods were used in Asoka's day. Wrapped in thick layers of cotton and skins, the pillar was lowered onto a specially constructed wagon with twenty-one pairs of wheels. Then 8400 men (200 at each wheel) pushed and pulled the cart to the Jumna, where the pillar was transferred to grain boats lashed together and floated down the river to Delhi. Here it was again moved by wagon and through a complicated system of pulleys was re-erected at the Muslim capital. A thirteenth-century engraving on a large stone in the old fort at Raichur, in Hyderabad, shows a huge monolith being transported on a heavy-wheeled cart drawn by numerous pairs of buffaloes, with men levering the wheels from behind, and the

very monolith depicted in the engraving, forty-one and a half feet in length, was inserted in the wall of the fort, near its western gate, where it still is. The Asokan pillars were not only moved hundreds of miles in this way but were often pushed up to the top of considerable hills, like the pillar which once stood at Sanchi. The ingenuity of the Indian laborers who accomplished this work without any modern devices to make it easy is truly astonishing.

The dome-shaped stupas built by the Emperor Asoka seem all to have been made of brick, but they were given stonework embellishments. The processional path around the base was marked off by a massive stone railing, and a similar smaller railing of stone was built round the relic box, usually at the top of the brick dome. Above the relic chamber, an umbrella of carved and polished stone, symbol of royalty and sovereignty, was another characteristic feature. In later times, the old stupas were often enlarged and provided with a stone facing and tall gateways at the four sides.

Acres of crumbled brick and dust are all that are left of the great Mauryan cities, some of whose ruins have been identified. One of these cities lay in what is known as the Bhir Mount at Taxila. But bas-reliefs on the gateways of the Sanchi Stupa, carved less than two hundred years after the time of Asoka, vividly portray the ancient Indian city, with its battlemented walls and heavy gates and moat. Asoka built himself a palace of stone at Pataliputra, which was still standing in the fifth century A.D. Fa Hian, a Chinese visitor who saw it, asserted that it could only have been built by supernatural means. Broken fragments of its polished stone pillars have been dug out of the thick layer of ash deposited by the fire which finally destroyed Asoka's palace perhaps not long after Fa Hian's visit.

Yet Asoka's thoughts, which he committed to writing on stone, outlived his palace and all other temporal structures of Mauryan times. For the next thousand years, the civilization of Asia bore the deep imprint of those same thoughts.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Foreign North*

PUSHYAMITRA SUNGA, as Brahmin commander in chief in Magadha, must have had the army behind him when he assassinated Brihadratha, the last of the Mauryas, as he was reviewing the imperial forces. But the new Sunga house he founded did not last much more than a century. In about 70 B.C., it was replaced by the short-lived Brahmin Dynasty of the Kanvas, and following them came the Satavahanas, also of Brahmin origin. Originally arising in the western Deccan, they presently swept eastward and rapidly became identified with the Andhras, ancestors of the Telugu-speaking peoples, and for the next two and a quarter centuries kings of this line dominated both the Deccan and northern India.

The curious interlude of Brahmin rule in India was certainly contrary to the established convention that only Kshatriyas could be kings by right of birth. It was doubtless a sign of unsettled conditions resulting from the collapse of the Mauryan Empire. Possibly, also, Asoka's generosity to Buddhist institutions had something to do with it. The hostility of non-Buddhists was concentrated against Buddhist kings, and Brahmin ministers, enlisting the support of those who favored a return from Buddhist democracy to Hindu orthodoxy, were able to climb the dizzy height to kingship.

Pushyamitra Sunga, as soon as he felt sufficiently secure, began to show himself aggressively anti-Buddhist, burning monasteries and placing a price in gold on the heads of monks. Buddhism had almost put a stop to animal sacrifice, but Pushyamitra revived the great "horse sacrifice" as a sign of world ruler-

ship. He and his successors showed partiality to Krishna worship, which now flared up in northern India as a warm popular religion of ardent devotion to Krishna as the Personal God. It soon cast a glowing spell over Buddhism itself, which lost much of its early austerity and became more emotional in its forms of expression. Yet persecutions of Buddhists under the Sungas could not have lasted long, for beautiful Buddhist monuments were erected in Sunga territory, during Sunga times.

Pushyamitra also gave practical encouragement to Brahmin scholarship. The original *Purana* and both the great Sanskrit epics were probably revised and edited under his patronage, and some believe that the *Bhagavad-Gita*, India's greatest religious song, was composed and inserted in the *Mahabharata* at this time. To the Sunga period, in any event, belongs Patanjali, the author of a well-known explanatory work on Panini's Sanskrit grammar, which did much to encourage the reversion to Sanskrit from the Pali of Asoka's day.

Still another interesting and important work of Sunga times is the *Manava Dharma Shastra*, or Code of Manu. Manu's Code is no lawbook in the modern sense of the term, but a mixed collection in Sanskrit verse based on an earlier prose treatise of religious, ethical, ceremonial, civil and criminal rules and precepts for right living and right conduct, as taught by a particular school of northwestern Brahmins called Manavas. Manu is only the mythical author whose name was written into the work to give it an age-old sanctity. The present-day fame of Manu's Code is largely due to accident. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Warren Hastings, the first Englishman to become governor general of India, chose this work out of forty-seven different Indian lawbooks submitted to him, and had it translated for use as a legal guide by East India Company officials in their dealings with Hindus.

The Code no doubt contains many fine statements of principles, but they are sometimes contradictory, and obviously many of the rules are inappropriate to modern conditions. Child mar-

riages as a guaranty of perfect chastity and prohibition against widow remarriage, even of virgin child widows, at least for the higher castes, derive their principal sanction from Manu's Code. Women are also placed by Manu under the permanent protection of fathers, husbands or sons. Brahmins are given a position of unchallenged superiority, and Sudras and outcasts suffer degradation. Yet who can say that the stiff and arbitrary rules of old "Manu," unpalatable though they are, have not done much to hold Hindu society together, in the face of many devastating foreign invasions? Ideals of self-sacrifice and self-control deeply appealed to Hindu India, and out of the hard limitations imposed by the Hindu social system, individuals constituting the society developed an amazing capacity of endurance. Self-sacrifice still ranks ahead of self-expression in India, and the Hindu social system, whatever its faults from a modern, democratic point of view, has proved to be of high survival value. There is no certainty that under any alternative system, Hindu civilization would have maintained itself at all.

While Pushyamitra was consolidating his power in Magadha, the flourishing colonies of Asiatic Greeks, still remaining in Bactria, on the far side of the Hindu Kush, thought they saw a golden opportunity to further their fortunes in India. They had already thrown off allegiance to the Seleucid rule in western Asia and declared themselves independent in the middle of the third century B.C., at the same time that the Parthians, a virile mountain tribe of northeastern Iran, known to the Indians as Parthavas or Pahlavas, had also established their independence. The first king of independent Bactria was Euthydemus, and his son Demetrius led a Greek army over the mountains and adopted the title of *Basileus Indikōn*, "King of the Indians." While Demetrius was adventuring in India, a usurper, Eukratides, established himself in Bactria. He, too, soon appeared over the mountains and vigorously disputed with Demetrius the rulership of the newly won Indian territory. In the end, princelings of the two rival Greek houses of Euthydemus and Eukratides set

themselves up in northwestern India, the former in the eastern Punjab, the latter in Gandhara and the western Punjab. Altogether, in the century and a half of Indo-Bactrian supremacy which followed, at least thirty kings and two queens of Greek descent ruled over Indian subjects in northwestern India. The last of these foreign kings was Hermaeus, of the line of Eukratides, who was still ruling north of the Kabul Valley about the beginning of the Christian Era.

Little is known about most of the Indo-Bactrians but their names, yet their coins, which are fine examples of the Greek coin art, bear remarkably lifelike royal portraits, such as the ones of Demetrius, wearing an elephant headdress patterned after Alexander's lion skin, and Eukratides. The later Indo-Bactrian coinage became quite inferior, but the types established by the early Bactrians were repeated again and again for centuries.

Regular coinage, issued from a royal mint and bearing the head of the ruling king, was an important contribution from Greece to India, but metal money itself was not new. Coins were already circulating freely in India as early as 600 B.C., and certainly long before the arrival of the Greeks. The Greek historians themselves state that Alexander received as part of the tribute paid to him by Ambhi at Taxila eighty talents of "stamped silver." These ancient Indian coins, known as *puranas*, were of three kinds, silver punch-marked coins, and die-struck and cast coins of copper. In the Mauryan period, punch-marked coins came into general use, and huge quantities of them have been found all over India. They were both square and circular in shape, the square type being the most common. They were cut from thin beaten sheets or strips of metal and were then clipped to the proper size and weight, apparently calculated on the decimal system. Symbols or devices were punched on them, such as trees, plants, mountains, animals, birds, human beings, Buddhist symbols, weapons and solar and planetary signs. These devices, of which more than three hundred have been counted,

probably represented a guaranty of value, like a trade-mark, placed on the money by well-known guilds or moneylenders.

Archaeology and literature have added a few meager details of Indo-Bactrian history. The Bactrians first occupied Taxila in the early part of the second century B.C., but found the site too restricted and built a new city for themselves at Sirkap, close by. Other known centers of Indo-Bactrian occupation were Kapisi, north of Kabul, Pushkalavati (Charsadda) on the Swat River in eastern Gandhara, and Sakala (Sialkot), in the Punjab. Sakala was chosen as his capital by Menander, best remembered of all the Indo-Greek kings by Indians, who know him as Milinda. A well-known Pali Buddhist work of about the beginning of the Christian Era, the *Milinda Panha*, or "Questions of Milinda," gives a flattering description of the busy and prosperous life of the royal city as it is supposed to have been in Menander's lifetime. The massive fortifications, the wide streets and pleasant parks, the wealth of products displayed in the bazaars, the cosmopolitan character of the population, are pictured in great detail, but it is especially charming to learn that the streets of hospitable Sakala constantly resounded "with cries of welcome to teachers of every creed."

Menander was a great soldier and he overran many small neighboring Indian kingdoms. There are contemporary Indian works which refer to Greek attacks on Mathura, Ayodhya, Pataliputra and a place in Rajputana. However, Menander is not remembered in India for his military exploits, but because he adopted Indian Buddhism. When he died, in 160 B.C., his loyal subjects fought amongst themselves for the possession of his earthly remains!

A trace of the influence of Indian religious thought on the Greek mind of the time is also reflected by a Brahmi inscription on a stone pillar at Besnagar, in Gwalior State, a few miles from the site of ancient Vidisa, the Sunga capital of eastern Malwa. The Greek ambassador Heliodorus, sent by Antialkidas of Taxila to pay his respects to the Sunga king, commemorated



the palace. He was thrown into prison, but later released, and in the end converted Gondapharnes to Christianity.

The story of St. Thomas does not end here. His name is still better known in connection with an apostolic mission to south India, where he is said to have landed at a port in Malabar in the year 51. Chronologically, it is quite possible that he could have gone to southern India after the death of Gondapharnes, probably in A.D. 45. After residing for some years in Malabar, he is supposed to have carried his missionary labors to the east coast of India, where he was martyred by hostile Brahmins while saying his prayers. The traditional site of his martyrdom and burial is at Mylapore, in the suburbs of Madras, where there now stands the sixteenth-century Portuguese Cathedral of San Thomé. One thing is quite certain. The Syrian Christian Church was actually established in south India early in the first century after Christ, and it seems plausible that St. Thomas was the missionary responsible for first bringing Christianity to India.

The Pahlavas were ardent admirers of Greek culture, and the ruins around Taxila have yielded ample proof of how they were charmed by Hellenism. Outside the north gate of Sirkap are the foundations of a large temple built on a plan closely resembling that of the Parthenon at Athens. Its Ionic columns and pilasters might have been taken straight from classical Greece. Numerous small objects of pure Greek workmanship have also come to light — a silver plaque of Dionysos, a small bronze statuette of the popular Egyptian-Greek child-god Harpocrates (who is commonly represented as pointing to the "basket of mysteries" on his head), a gold figure of a winged Aphrodite, a Cupid medallion.

The Pahlavas generally seem to have been followers of the popular Zoroastrian religion of Iran, but in spite of this the majority of their Indian subjects remained loyal to Buddhism. A great many small stupas have been found in front of the remains of private houses; and in one quarter of Sirkap the foundation walls of a large Buddhist temple, once having porch,

nave, circular apse, and a processional path, have been uncovered. This temple is of special interest because it can be dated from not later than the middle of the first century A.D., and it represents the earliest known freestanding Buddhist temple of India.



Harpocrates  
God of  
Silence  
The Greek HORUS

Image of  
300 B.C.  
found at  
Taxila

Most of the jewelry and the ten thousand coins dug up at Sirkap came from under the floors of the houses. This has led to the suggestion that very possibly they were hidden away in haste when Taxila once again faced an invasion by foreigners, in about A.D. 60. Already in a little more than two centuries it had suffered three foreign invasions, by Bactrians, Sakas and Pahlavas. Now came a fourth invasion, of Kushans. Sirkap was sacked, and Kushan Taxila sprang up a few miles to the north-east, on the site today marked by the village of Sirsukh. The exact date of the Kushan conquest is not known, but a Khároshthi inscription from a stupa of Taxila bears a date corresponding to A.D. 78, and clearly states that in this year the ruler of Taxila was the "Great King, Supreme King of Kings, Son of Heaven, the Kushana."

Who was this illustrious personage, bold enough to appropriate to himself the Greek title of "great king," the Persian title of "supreme king of kings" and the Chinese title of "son of

heaven"? His name is not given, but small silver coins from Taxila have the portrait and name of one Vima Kadphises who bears similar titles, and the same titles invariably appear on the coins of his successor, the famous Kanishka, under whom the Kushan capital was shifted from Taxila to Purushapura—Peshawar.

The Chinese Annals of the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.—A.D. 220) fortunately provide a good deal of information about the background of the Kushans, who might otherwise have seemed to descend into India from empty space. They were nomads, probably of eastern Turkish stock, and when the Chinese first came into contact with them, they were occupying the borderlands of northwestern China. The Chinese called them Yueh-chi. Other nomads, the Hiung-nu, or Huns, fierce Tatars from the north, presently compelled the Yueh-chi to fold their tents and migrate westward. Slowly the whole tribe moved on across central Asia, with their women and carts and horses, their sheep and oxen, until at last they arrived in the region of Farghana (Bukhara), along the upper reaches of the Amu Daria, or Oxus. Here they found the Sakas already encamped, and since there was no room for both, the Yueh-chi drove the Sakas southward into Bactria. Pleased with their new home, the Yueh-chi were just settling down comfortably when their old enemies the Hiung-nu suddenly caught up with them in Farghana. Once more they had to flee. Following the path of the Sakas, they moved first into Sogdiana, then into Bactria, where they remained for about a century. Here they gave up their nomadic habits and showed a surprising capacity to absorb the higher culture of both Bactrians and Parthians. Under Kujula Kadphises, a contemporary of Gondapharnes, their five clans were finally welded into one, the Kushan clan. There was still restlessness in their blood, however, and about the beginning of the Christian Era the Yueh-chi, or Kushans as history was henceforth to know them, poured down into the Kabul Valley and

Gandhara. Ultimately the empire they created stretched from central Asia to the edge of Bengal.

While the Yueh-chi were still in Bactria, they received a visit from the Chinese general Chang Kien. This was an important event, because it led indirectly to the opening up of relations between China and India. Chang Kien set forth from China in 138 B.C., sent by the Han emperor Wu-ti to obtain help from the Yueh-chi in fighting their common enemy the Hiung-nu. The Yueh-chi saw no reason to help a Chinese emperor who had never done anything in particular for them, and Chang Kien had to go back empty-handed. But not quite. Being a keen observer, he collected seeds of alfalfa and grapes as he passed through Farghana, and he also learned the secret of how to make grape wine. He took note, too, of all the strange and interesting things he saw and heard on his long journey, which lasted all told twelve years. Wu-ti listened spellbound to Chang Kien's recital of marvels, but his heart quickened most when he heard of the beautiful big horses of Farghana, horses with powerful breasts and croups and slender feet, very different from the rough little Mongolian ponies which were the only horses the Chinese knew. Wu-ti made up his mind then and there to have some of these splendid horses, and in due course dispatched a second mission to Farghana, with suitable presents to offer in exchange. But the Chinese emissaries met with scant courtesy, received no horses, and were killed in the act of trying to steal some. The insult was unbearable. The mighty emperor of the Han country lost no time in equipping an army and sending it westward. Farghana was chastised and made to pay a heavy fine, principally consisting of horses. Seeing the fate of Farghana, the other little states of central Asia hastened to send tribute of their own accord and acknowledge themselves vassals of China. By the end of the first century A.D., another famous general, Pan Chao, led a Chinese army almost to the Caspian. Thus the shadow of Han lengthened across Asia, and the Ku-

shans, turning their eyes this way and that, began to fear China deep down in their hearts.

At last the Kushan king — whether it was Vima Kadphises or Kanishka is not certain — decided upon a trial of strength. An ambassador was dispatched to demand the hand of a Chinese princess. Pan Chao promptly arrested the Kushan envoy. To avenge the affront, a Kushan force of 70,000 cavalry was boldly sent over a 14,000-foot pass in the Pamirs to attack the Chinese encamped in the plains of Yarkand, in central Asia. It was a foolhardy venture. The Chinese fell on the exhausted Kushan army and completely annihilated it, and the Kushan ruler had to pay the usual penalty of defeat by rendering tribute to China.

A time came, however, when Kanishka wiped out the humiliating memory. The Kushan Empire then included the whole of northern India, as well as Bactria and Afghanistan. A Kushan satrap ruled at Benares. The wealth of India this time enabled Kanishka to send a much larger and better-equipped army over the Pamirs. The redoubtable Pan Chao was dead, and his son had taken his place. As a result of Kanishka's victory, Kashkar, Yarkand and Khotan, on the famous Silk Road to China, became part of the Kushan Empire. The tribute previously paid by India was of course stopped, and the Kushans demanded and carried back with them a number of Chinese hostages. The Han Annals say these hostages were well treated in India. They were given residences suitable to the different seasons at Kapisi, and in Gandhara and the Punjab. It is they who are supposed to have introduced the peach and the pear into India. Perhaps the fine Chinese lacquer bowls recently dug up at Kapisi once belonged to those very same Chinese hostages.

Kanishka dreamed of a still greater empire to embrace the four quarters of the world. At last the people grew weary of endless campaigning far from home. This king does not know when to stop, they murmured to one another. When he fell ill by chance, legend has it that they simply smothered him by holding a quilt down over his head. Two sons succeeded him,

Vasishka and Huvishka. Nothing is known about the first, except that two inscriptions issued in his name have been found at Mathura and Sanchi. Huvishka, who reigned thirty years, was a patron of Buddhism, like his father, and endowed one large Buddhist monastery at Mathura and another at a town founded by him in Kashmir and named Huvishkapura, after himself. The village occupying the site today is still called Huskpur, or Uskur.

The last great Kushan ruler was Vasudeva. His coins have turned up in the Punjab and the United Provinces, but all his inscriptions are confined to the Mathura region. Perhaps he no longer exercised any authority over the northern territories. There is some indication that Ardeshir, the first king of the new Sassanid Dynasty of Iran, raided India about this time and established his control over certain areas. The coinage of both the later Kushan princes and the Saka satraps of western India reflects a distinct Persian influence. Even the legends are sometimes written in Persian, and a Zoroastrian fire altar appears on some types. Coins issued in the name of Vasudeva show the Kushan king in Persian dress. The great Kushan Empire, which had lasted two centuries, was now disintegrating. Only the Kidara Kushans, a Bactrian branch, managed to hang on to power a little while longer in the Kabul Valley, until they were swept aside by the White Huns in the fifth century.

It was during the period of Kushan rule that Indian relations actively developed with Rome, as well as with China. When Augustus proclaimed himself emperor, some of the Indian kings thought it expedient to send to the West missions of congratulation. The historian Strabo has left an account of one such Indian mission, dispatched by a "lord of six hundred kings," called Poros by some, and Pandion by others. The head of this mission carried a letter written in Greek, inviting Augustus to form an alliance with him and offering Roman citizens free passage throughout his dominions. The party first set out from Barygaza, or Broach, at the mouth of the Narbada River, in 25 B.C. They

sailed through the Persian Gulf, traveled up the Euphrates and then struck overland to Damascus and Antioch. A Buddhist or Jain monk accompanied the expedition, and this man, like Kalyana of old, greatly startled the Athenians by burning himself on a pyre when he eventually reached Athens. It took the mission four years to reach Augustus, before whom they finally presented themselves on the island of Samos. Here they delivered their Greek letter and the gifts they had brought — tigers, a python, some gigantic tortoises, a Himalayan pheasant and an armless boy who shot arrows with his toes! The tigers were publicly shown in 13 B.C. at the opening of the Theater of Marcellus in Rome, the first tigers ever to be seen in Europe.

The Kushans greatly admired the Romans, and were quick to perceive that the splendid Roman gold coins current in Asia possessed international value. The Kushans, in consequence, were the first rulers in India to strike gold coins in imitation of those of Rome, of an almost similar weight and fineness, in order to promote India's trade with the West. On one side of these coins were portraits of themselves, with their pointed beards, peaked caps, long belted coats with flaring skirts and huge boots with turned-up toes. On the other side were the images of various deities, both foreign and Indian. Among the Indian ones were Shiva with his bull Nandi, Shiva's son Skanda, god of war, and Buddha. The foreign policies of the Kushans and their success in arms stimulated their trade immensely, especially between Rome and Taxila. The Romans, for their part, who felt a mortal enmity for Parthia, on the confines of their dominions, considered the Kushans potential allies, worth cultivating. At the beginning of the second century A.D. the frontiers of India and the Roman world were actually no more than six hundred miles apart. A Kushan embassy was therefore received by Trajan in Rome in A.D. 99 with flattering distinction. The Indians were given senators' seats in the theater.

India was immensely rich in all those articles of luxury for which Rome suddenly developed an avid taste — jewels and

fine muslins, ivory and tortoise shell, indigo, drugs, cosmetics, perfumes, condiments and spices. Tiberius, who became emperor after Augustus, complained that such vast amounts of Roman gold were flowing to India to buy pearls and diamonds for the Roman ladies that there was actually a serious lack of precious metals to carry on the military administration and defend the frontiers of the Roman Empire. When Pompey brought back from Asia Minor the magnificent jewels of Mithridates the Great and placed them on exhibition in the Temple of Jove, Rome awakened to a disastrous passion for jewels. At the same time, the fashionable Roman world was also seized with a longing to wear the new silk from China, much of it imported by way of India. Matrons who had once soberly spun and woven their own wool now clamored for costly silks, literally worth their weight in gold. The closely woven Chinese silks, of impeccably good taste, were unwound and rewoven as gauze for the Roman market. Tiberius finally made a law forbidding the use of transparent silk as indecent.

Under the first five Roman emperors, the imports into Italy from India and the East mounted higher and higher, especially during the extravagant reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68). India, in exchange, imported from the West only limited quantities of linen, coral, glass, antimony, copper, tin, lead and wine, so that the balance of trade was always heavily in India's favor, and Rome had to settle her bills in gold. A reaction to this policy set in after Nero, and the Eastern trade began to fall off, but there was no abrupt end to it. When Alaric the Goth besieged Rome in 410, part of the ransom he demanded for sparing the city from total destruction was 3000 pounds of Indian pepper.

At first the bulk of this trade passed along the overland routes crisscrossing Asia and converging from all directions in Bactria. It is true that Persian, Greek, Arab and Indian ships had long been cautiously plying along the coast between India and the Persian Gulf, Aden, Mocha, and Solomon's ancient port and iron foundry town of Ezion-Geber, at the head of the Gulf of Aquaba

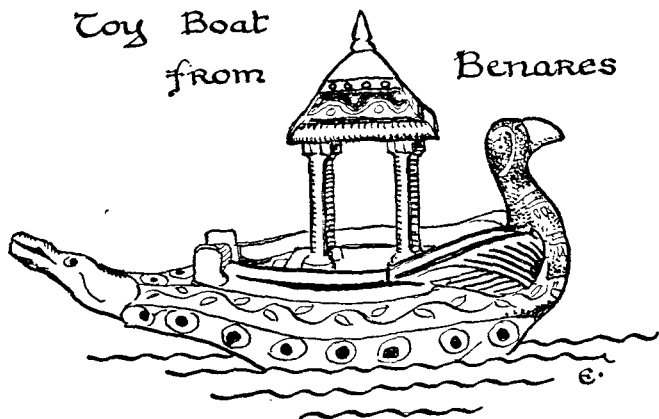
on the Red Sea. But pirates of many nationalities lay in wait to snatch the rich cargoes, and the dangers of shipwreck or becalming were very real. Hence, the overland routes, though longer, were safer.

A Greek trading record of the latter half of the first century A.D., the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, or "Periplus of the Erythrean Sea," by an unknown Alexandrian captain, describes the coasting voyage from Egypt to India in these early days, and makes incidental mention of interesting topics such as the dangerous tides of Broach, the coins of the Greek king Menander still current there, quarrels between Saka and Pahlava princes in Surashtra (Kathiawar), the curious Indian imports of "Singing boys and choice girls for the royal harem." The account goes on to describe the various ports of the Deccan and southern India, particularly the famous pepper port of Muziris (Cranganore), in Malabar. Beyond this were Barake and Nelkynda, in the Pandya country, which was the chief source of supply for bulky pepper and precious stones — above all, pearls and beryls. The latter were in great demand for cameos and seals. Although it is clear that the author had not himself traded beyond this point, he also sets down such chance information as he had picked up from others about the east-coast trade — the business to be done in muslins at Poduca (Pondicherry) and Soptama (Madras) and Masalia (Masulipatam), the ivories at Pukar, in Orissa, and fine textiles from Benares, malabathrum, a variety of cinnamon, brought down from the jungles for export to Tamralipti, at the mouth of the Ganges. But already an important discovery had been made, about the middle of the century, which was to divert much of this trade to a new course.

A Greek captain named Hippalus suddenly observed — what must already have been common knowledge to Indian and Arab sailors — that during the summer months a regular wind blew steadily from the southwest across the Indian Ocean. This, of course, was the monsoon, the English name for which was taken later from the Arabic word *mauzim*. Hippalus found that by

Toy Boat  
from

BENARES



setting out from Africa in July, and cleverly utilizing the newly discovered "trade wind," he could steer a course right across the middle of the Indian Ocean to any port he chose on the west coast of India. The time necessary for a voyage by sea between India and Alexandria, the principal entrepôt for the Indian trade with Rome, was thus reduced to a bare two months, and as many as 120 ships now began to sail from the Red Sea for India each season. On the return voyage to Africa three months later, the ships unloaded cargoes and passengers either at Myos Hormos or Berenike, on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea, and from there traffic passed overland to the Nile, and thence again by boat down to Alexandria.

When Ptolemy, the great second-century astronomer, mathematician and geographer of Alexandria, produced the first scientific geography and drafted the first global map, it is quite possible that he had in front of him a manuscript of the *Periplus*. In this map, it is true, India was shown as a country extending east and west, rather than north and south, Asia and Africa were joined together to make one continent and the Indian Ocean was merely an inland sea. But in spite of these distortions, Ptolemy's map revealed that the world was becoming known and that the darkness hitherto shrouding the great Asiatic continent, as far as the West was concerned, was definitely beginning to recede.

Midway between East and West lay the great city of Alexan-

dria, which had long replaced Athens as the chief center of Greek culture. At this time it was second only to Rome in splendor. In the early centuries of the Christian Era, it was a meeting place for the traders and adventurers, the philosophers and scholars, the saints and mystics, of three continents.

Just what part Indian ideas contributed to the Alexandrian medley is not easy to say. The first Indian known to have visited Alexandria was a humble shipwrecked sailor, picked up at the entrance to the Red Sea and taken to Alexandria in the second century B.C. Yet indirectly he was responsible for opening up new geographical vistas. The Egyptian government provided a ship for him to pilot himself home, and along with him went an interesting Greek explorer, Eudoxus. Eudoxus became convinced, after twice making the journey back and forth to India, that this country might also be reached by sailing in the opposite direction, west and south, around Africa. Eventually he succeeded in fitting out an expedition and set sail from Cadiz, in Spain. Undaunted when the expedition was wrecked, he returned, fitted out another, and again set sail, but nothing more was heard of him. Sixteen hundred years later Vasco da Gama accomplished what Eudoxus vainly tried to do.

By the third century A.D., Alexandrian writers had certainly gathered a fair knowledge of India from one source or another. A work on Indian yogis by a Babylonian Gnostic named Bardesanes, who obtained his material from members of an Indian mission to Syria in A.D. 218, was known to Alexandrian Neo-Platonists. Bardesanes, among other things, described in detail a Hindu cave temple and gave a surprisingly accurate picture of Buddhist monastic life, with its bell-ringing as a call to prayer and food. He cited the monk's vows of chastity, poverty and non-injury and mentioned the customary state support of monasteries. Clement of Alexandria, an early Church Father of Greek birth, had a tutor who had been to India as a missionary. Clement's own lectures at the Academy were attended by Indian students, and in his writings he refers to Brahmin abstentions

from meat and wine, and also differentiates clearly between Brahmins and Buddhists. "There are some Indians," he wrote, "who follow the precepts of *Boutta*, whom by an excessive reverence they have exalted into a God." He describes the stupa worshipped by Buddhists as "a kind of pyramid beneath which they imagine that the bones of a divinity . . . lie buried." Later, St. Jerome would tell the story of the miraculous birth of the Buddha. After many years, St. Anthony emerged from the solitude of the Egyptian desert to found the first order of Christian monks. Some of his monastic ideas — the ringing of bells, the use of the rosary, the strict discipline imposed on the brotherhood — may well have been borrowed from the system of Buddhist monasticism, already eight hundred years old.

Indian numerals, commonly miscalled Arabic, were introduced by Indian merchants into Alexandria, probably in the second century A.D. Asoka used written numerals five hundred years earlier in his Brahmi inscriptions, but an unknown Indian mathematician, about a century before the beginning of the Christian Era, made the greatest of all contributions to arithmetic, the invention of the place-value system and zero. According to this system, numerals acquired a value depending on their place, or position, in a series of numbers built up on the decimal plan. The same numerals in 12 or 21, for example, express different values, depending on their sequence. The civilized world today takes for granted this ingenious numerical system, by which all arithmetical calculations can be worked out by the use of only nine numerals and zero, and complacently forgets what it owes to India for this wonderful discovery. In comparison with the Indian system, the ancient Greek alphabetical notation and the clumsy Roman symbols were very inconvenient.

The earliest references to the new system in India appear in Sanskrit literary works of slightly before and just after the beginning of the Christian Era. From the end of the fifth century, however, all Indian mathematicians were already using the new system. By the seventh century, it had made its way eastward

to Sumatra, Cambodia and Annam, as proved by inscriptions with dates recorded in the Indian Saka Era. It was also known to a seventh-century Syrian Christian monk, living in a monastery on the Euphrates. Annoyed with the Greek presumption of complete superiority in the field of science, this Syrian, Severus Sebokht, wrote a spirited defense of Syrian scientific knowledge and referred incidentally to India, in these words: "I will omit all discussion of the science of the Hindus . . . their subtle discoveries in the science of astronomy, discoveries that are more ingenious than those of the Greeks and Babylonians; their computing that surpasses description. I wish only to say that this computation is done by means of nine signs."

A century later, Indian mathematical works were translated into Arabic in Baghdad. The Arabs had hitherto possessed no numerals of their own, but had used Greek or Coptic signs, and had done their calculations on the abacus. They at once perceived the superiority of the Indian system and eagerly took it over, giving full credit to India. They introduced it into their African and Spanish conquests, and from Spain it passed into Europe. Europe first tentatively began to use Indian numerals and the Indian numerical system in the tenth or eleventh century, but it was not until the seventeenth century that they came into general use in the Western world.

While India in the Kushan period was throwing out silken threads to capture the imagination and trade of the larger world, an event had taken place at home of tremendous importance. The majority of Kanishka's Indian subjects in the north were already Buddhists. But when the Kushan king was himself converted to Buddhism, he was seized, like Asoka, with burning missionary zeal. Stupas and monasteries and temples and chapels now rose up thickly all over the northern land. In Bactria, in the Kabul Valley, in Gandhara, in Swat, in Kashmir and the Punjab, the white walls of Buddhist buildings, the gilded and painted stupa domes, came to dominate nearly every rocky crest. They stood out against the green slopes of the lesser hills, and

towered impressively from the brown plains in the vicinity of important cities. Traders saw them, pilgrims visited them. The contagion spread outward to the oases of central Asia and along the Silk Road to distant China. The Great Illuminator offered peace and joy to all who accepted him, without distinction of race or caste. Chinese Buddhists came to revere Kanishka next only to Asoka, among Indian kings, for it was he who did more than anyone else to make Buddhism a living creed for people beyond India.

Kanishka's conversion is attributed to Asvaghosha, a gifted Brahmin who had himself become a convert to Buddhism. The Kushan ruler, according to tradition, forcibly carried away Asvaghosha from Ayodhya to his capital of Peshawar. Originally of a haughty temperament, Asvaghosha now turned himself into a sort of strolling minstrel. He went about singing and reciting poetry and staging edifying Buddhist plays. Fragments of the palm-leaf manuscript of one of them, having to do with the conversion of the two Buddhist elders, Sariputta and Moggallana, have been recovered from distant Turfan, in central Asia. Asvaghosha is best known, however, as the author of a famous poetical work in Sanskrit, the *Buddha-charita*, or Life of Buddha. This popular work, rendered into English from a Chinese translation, inspired Sir Edwin Arnold's well-known poem, *The Light of Asia*.

At least eighteen Buddhist sects had arisen by the first century A.D., and each claimed to represent the only true teaching of the Blessed One. Kanishka, puzzled and troubled by the conflicting views, decided to summon a great council to settle the disputes. This was the Fourth Buddhist Council. Whether it met in Kashmir or at Jalandhara (Jullundar) in the Punjab is not certain. Some five hundred eminent monks and scholars from all parts of India assembled under the leadership of the learned Parsva. After deliberations lasting for six months, the council produced its new Sanskrit commentaries on the three *Pitakas* of the Pali Canon, and various other works. Kanishka afterwards

had the commentaries engraved on sheets of copper and a stupa erected over them, so that they might be preserved forever. Unfortunately the stupa has remained untraced, and it is only through the Chinese translations that the commentaries have been saved. By the king's order, the Pali Canon was officially translated into Sanskrit for Buddhists in northwest India who were forgetting, or who had never learned, Pali.

The new Buddhism which now emerged differed greatly from the earlier Buddhism. Its followers called it Mahayana, or the Greater Vehicle, and referred somewhat contemptuously to the teachings of the earlier Buddhist school as Hinayana, the Lesser Vehicle. Both types of Buddhism shared the ancient Indian belief in transmigration, in the reward and punishment of good and bad deeds in future lives. Both believed in the possibility of the individual's attainment of Nirvana, or release from rebirth, through spiritual knowledge gained by right living and right thinking. Both accepted with the utmost loyalty the Three Jewels — Buddha, his Doctrine, and the Brotherhood, or Church. But Hinayana Buddhism looked upon the Buddha as a human sage and a Great Teacher, who by his own life showed the path he wanted men to follow. Mahayana Buddhism called the historical Buddha the earthly shadow of an Eternal Buddha, a Divine Being to be worshipped as God and Saviour. The goal of the Hinayanist was his personal Nirvana. The goal of the Mahayanist came to be that expressed in the teaching of the heavenly Bodhisattvas, who gave up individual emancipation in order to seek the salvation of others. These two divisions have persisted down to the present time. Hinayana Buddhism flourishes in Ceylon, Burma and Siam, and Mahayana Buddhism is found in Nepal, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Korea and Japan. In the land of its birth, Buddhism has no more than a few thousand adherents today. The chief points of difference between the two schools are whether the Buddha is to be looked upon as a man or as a Divine Being, whether Divine Bodhisattvas exist or do not exist, and whether the faithful who become perfect,

after many lives, are simply Arhats, liberated individuals, or true Buddhas.

There must have been something in the air of Asia in Kanishka's time to make men want a personal God to adore and worship. Little bands of Christians in western Asia, Egypt, Greece and Italy were worshipping Jesus Christ as their Saviour. In India, Vaishnavism, the worship of Vishnu in various incarnations, particularly Krishna, was coming to the fore. Though the synthesis of all the paths to spiritual knowledge is taught in the *Gita*, here, perhaps for the first time, it is clearly stated that supreme love for God is enough to win salvation for the devotee: "They who, restraining the bodily powers, everywhere equal-minded, worship the Eternal, undefined, unmanifest, omnipresent, unthinkable, the basis of things, immovable and firm, they come to Me. . . . But the toil of those whose minds are set on the Unmanifest is greater, for the way of the Unmanifest is hard for mortals to attain. But they who in Me, renouncing all works, are bent on Me, draw near to Me, meditating with singlehearted union, I am become their Saviour from the ocean of death and birth after no long time."

Buddhism at this time also becomes imbued with the devotional spirit. The theistic outlook is emphasized when the followers of the Greater Vehicle begin to worship the Buddha as an expression of divinity, and along with him a whole host of heavenly Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The concept arises of a Primeval Buddha, the Adi Buddha, creating from his deep meditation five Dhyani Buddhas. Among them the one called Amitabha, "Infinite Light," represented as having taken the vow to save all human beings and to prepare for them a beautiful Paradise in the West, was to appeal most especially in later centuries to the Buddhists of China and Japan. In Japan, Amida Buddha, as he is there known, has come to rival Gotama Buddha as the central object of worship. Each Dhyani Buddha, in this complex Buddhist hierarchy, is associated with certain celestial Bodhisattvas, who remain Bodhisattvas forever, in order to help suffering

mankind. In addition, all the divine Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have their female counterparts or attendants, the Buddhist goddesses. Tara, "Star," the counterpart of the compassionate Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, "He who looks down from above," is the principal one among them. Avalokitesvara, who welcomes the saved to Amitabha's heaven, acquired early popularity wherever Mahayana Buddhism took root. Fused with Tara, this merciful deity was ultimately transformed into Kwan Yin in China, Kwannon in Japan.

Apart from the realm of the heavenly Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Mahayana Buddhism also makes room for an earthly realm. The earthly Bodhisattvas, after repeatedly taking birth as men or lesser creatures, always unswervingly devoted to the goal, finally become Buddhas, each under his own tree of enlightenment. Of these earthly Buddhas — twenty-four in the Pali texts, eight or nine in other versions — Gotama Buddha is the last but one. The Bodhisattva Maitreya is the Future Buddha.

But there are still other regions where dwell gods, demons and spirits who also have a part to play in Buddhist mythology. The great gods Indra and Brahma, who first urged Gotama Buddha to make known to the world his healing message of truth and salvation, are represented as attending upon him with umbrella and fly whisk. The Lokapalas are the stalwart and faithful Guardians of the Four Quarters. Nagas, half-human serpents of the watery underworld, adore the Buddha with clasped hands or gently shield him with their serpent hoods. Yakshas and Yakshis are the ancient male and female spirits of tree and mountain tamed by the Blessed One to humble goodness. Lord of the Yakshas is Kuvera, king of riches, whose affinity with Buddhism is somewhat confused. Hariti is the once fearsome ogress accustomed to devour little children, whose heart was softened when the Buddha hid her own child in his begging-bowl. Taught the true meaning of mother love, Hariti now listens to the fervent prayers for offspring of childless women.

All this measureless wealth of material lay ready to hand for the first- and second-century Buddhist artists and sculptors. They drew their inspiration from legend and mythology, from the Jatakas, from the great episodes of the earthly life of Gotama Buddha, from the conception of the new Buddhist heavens, with all their panoply of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas attended by garland-bearing angels and celestial dancers and musicians, from the great assemblies of the faithful who came together in solemn adoration to pay homage to the Divine Being. The purpose was to arouse an emotional response in the hearts of monks and pilgrims and lay worshippers, and in this the artist craftsmen nobly succeeded. The new art of the north, called Gandharan art because of its association with the region of Gandhara, or Greco-Buddhist art because the predominant technique for rendering Buddhist themes was Greek, saw its rise in the first century A.D., reached its climax under the Kushans in the second, and slowly began to die out in the third. A great part of Asia was to become indebted to Gandhara for new art forms, and the great Buddhist art of the Far East took its first inspiration from this source.

It is not difficult to understand why the Kushans, themselves of foreign origin, looked to the Eurasian craftsmen of Bactria and Gandhara, trained in Greco-Roman art conventions, for suitable forms to express the new ideas of Mahayana Buddhism. In the Deccan, a magnificent and entirely original school of early Indian art had already reached a high stage of perfection in the first century A.D. This truly Indian art, far superior in its freshness and decorative qualities to anything produced in Gandhara, was certainly not unknown to the Kushans. Excavations in Kapisi, in northern Afghanistan, which came under Kushan rule, have brought to light a fascinating collection of ivory plaques, or panels, with charmingly carved figures in relief in the typical Sanchi style of the Deccan. So identical in feeling with Sanchi are some of these carvings that they might well

have been the work of the very same ivory carvers of Vidisa, who were responsible for the South Gateway of the great Sanchi Stupa itself.

But to the Kushans, the art of India probably seemed far more foreign than Greco-Roman art. They had come into India by way of Bactria, which at the time of their invasion had sixty large Hellenic towns. They had remained there long enough to become thoroughly acclimatized and to feel on the friendliest of terms with the Greek gods whose statues in the temples resembled glorified men. Greek realism must have been much more comprehensible to them than the restrained and delicate symbolism of the early Indian Buddhist art. To the Hinayanist mind, it was unseemly to drag back to earth, as it were, by any form of direct representation, one who had attained the high state of spiritual and bodily emancipation identified with Nirvana. So the Buddha was represented only by holy symbols — a lotus for the Birth, an empty throne under the Bodhi tree and a footstool with the sacred imprints of his feet for the Enlightenment, the Wheel of the Law for the First Sermon, an umbrella over the spot where he was not, to indicate his presence in other scenes, the stupa for his Nirvana. When Mahayana Buddhism made the Buddha into a god, to be worshipped and prayed to with flowers, perfume and incense, with litany and music, the old restraint lost its meaning. For the first time, Buddha images were chiseled and set up as the focus of ceremonial worship.

The earliest existing Buddha image so far known is carved on a gold relic casket originally found inside a soapstone vase, bearing a Kharoshthi inscription, recovered from a stupa at Bimaran in eastern Afghanistan — part of old Gandhara. The vase contained votive coins of the Saka king, Azes I, who reigned in the half century immediately preceding the Christian Era, and this must be the period of the image. The oldest datable images, however, adorn a Buddha relic box of bronze from Peshawar, dedicated in the year I of Kanishka. This casket,

which contained a crystal reliquary with a tiny piece of bone, was discovered two feet under the floor at the exact center of what was once Kanishka's great relic tower at Peshawar, famed far and wide. The site, first identified by the French archaeologist M. Alfred Foucher, on the basis of descriptions in old Chinese books, was verified beyond doubt by the lucky find of Kanishka's inscribed casket.

This relic tower and an adjoining monastery were erected by Kanishka just outside his capital, and the tower was still standing in the sixth century. It was made of stone, brick and wood, and rose in fourteen tiers to a height of 600 feet. It was crowned by an iron pinnacle which supported a series of bronze umbrellas, the insignia of Buddha's royalty. Kanishka's tower and the familiar pagoda of the Far East bear a definite relation to each other, but whether the Kushans borrowed the type from a Chinese model or the Chinese used Kanishka's tower as a source of architectural inspiration is a matter of differing opinion. On the lid of the precious casket a small Buddha sits on a pedestal, with a lotus-petaled halo behind his head, flanked by two worshipping Bodhisattvas. Another Buddha, Sun and Moon deities, cupids bearing a heavy garland, a portrait of Kanishka himself and a frieze of geese chasing one another with outstretched necks, adorn the sides of the casket. Although the workmanship is clumsy, the casket is naturally of great historical interest. The inscription states that it is the work of Agisala, overseer of Kanishka's monastery. Agisala is an Indian transcription of the Greek name Agesilaos, and Kanishka's master of works was most probably a Buddhist of Indo-Greek descent.

From the Kushan period onward, Buddhist images, dated and undated, were executed in great numbers, both in the eastern as well as the northern part of the empire. A standing Buddha, with the Greek word "Boddo" inscribed at one side, formed the device on one of Kanishka's gold coins. When Mathura became the eastern capital of the Kushan kings, it already had a vigorous Indian art tradition behind it. From its workshops had come sev-

eral large primitive figures in stone and votive stone tablets bearing Jain images. Buddhist sculpture of the Sanchi type must also have been produced at Mathura, since many sculptured fragments of this school have been found in the vicinity of Mathura. From the first years of Kanishka's reign, however, dedicated statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, intended for niches and



**The Emperor Kanishka**  
A.D. 78-101

shrines, were produced from the red Mathura sandstone, and some of them soon found their way as far as Sarnath and Sravasti and Sanchi, where they influenced the development of Gupta art in succeeding centuries. The ambitious Mathura craftsmen also began to try their hands at portrait sculpture. An inscribed headless statue of Kanishka (now in the Curzon Museum, Muttra) is one of the best-known examples of this new departure.

In the secluded valley of Bamian, west of Kabul at the foot of the Hindu Kush, first- or second-century sculptors were also

busy hewing from the living rock face two enormous images of the Buddha — one of them no less than 170 feet high, the other, 115 feet. A man stands on a level with the big toe of the greater image! Both are still in their original niches, though damaged by nineteen hundred years of exposure and ignorant attempts at mutilation. On top of the rough carving a coating of lime plaster takes the finer modeling. For centuries all travelers passing to and fro between Peshawar and the famous Buddhist center and trade mart of Balkh, in Bactria, stopped to wonder and marvel at the gigantic images, the chief adornment of a seven-mile cliff wall into which thousands of caves were cut — the onetime retreat of a great community of Buddhist monks. The idea of the Bamian Buddhist caves was most probably copied from the famous Ajanta caves in western India, where the earliest excavations date from the first or possibly the second century B.C. But Ajanta lay in a remote and not easily accessible spot. Bamian was on the main highway from central Asia to India, and its art, a strange hybrid of India and the Hellenistic East, overlaid with a strong Iranian influence, did much to fix the Buddhist art forms eventually adopted by the whole of central Asia, China and Japan.

Although Gandharan art made use of Greco-Roman ideals in the modeling of the Buddha's head, more like an Apollo than an Indian mystic, and in certain technical details, such as the handling of the folds of the monk's robe, the original conception of the Buddha figure was basically Indian, not Greek, and was evolved in strict accordance with the ideal description of the thirty-two auspicious signs on the Buddha's person, as given in the earliest Buddhist literature. The mark of wisdom between the eyebrows, the protuberance on the top of the head, the long ears, the long arms, the eyes closed, or all but closed, in inward contemplation, the arresting dignity of the standing figure, the quiescent seated figure, with legs crossed and the soles of both feet turned upward, the beautiful hand gestures, or *mudras*, indicating spiritual acts such as teaching, blessing, bestowing,

calling the earth to witness (at the time of the Assault of Mara), or deep meditation, in which the mind is at perfect rest "like a lamp that flickereth not in a windless spot." All this is of Indian tradition and bears no resemblance to anything foreign. Likewise the Bodhisattvas, loaded with jewelry and beautifully crowned, resemble slender young Indian princes of noble lineage, and could never remotely be mistaken for the athlete of magnificent body and objective mind, adored by the Greeks. Such Buddhist images were brought forth by the necessity of the new mode of Mahayana worship. They represented something less subtle, more direct and concrete, than the older Hinayana symbolism, but they were perfectly in keeping with Indian tradition. Sanchi, too, had its narrative art. For illiterate worshippers, the stone pictures illustrating the Jatakas and the life story of the Buddha were the simplest means of spreading the message of Buddhism, and along the outer rim of India, Gandhara, during the period of Kushan rule, was a source of an immense upsurge of religious conversion.

In the third century, when Gandharan art had already begun to lose its initial vitality and was tending to grow stereotyped and commonplace, it threw off a curious but significant offshoot. This particular hybrid has been given the name of Indo-Afghan art, because most of the examples have happened to come from Hadda, near Jelalabad, in Afghanistan. The craftsmen of this school used stucco as their medium, instead of stone, and with their more easily worked material produced a great variety of finely modeled sculptures. Figurines and small heads by the thousands have been picked up, of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and also of distinct racial types of Asia, Brahmins with coiled hair and pointed beards, shaven monks, smiling Buddhist angels, charming little ladies, grotesque dwarfs and buffoons, bearded philosophers of the Greek type, Asiatic warriors, flat-nosed barbarians, and an endless procession of interesting individual portrait masks. These stucco heads of Hadda are attributed to a period extending from the third to the fifth centuries of the pres-

ent era, and their unique interest partly lies in the fact that they resemble to a remarkable degree the Gothic art of Western Europe in medieval times. As M. René Grousset puts it, "Without any possible geographical contact or any imaginable historical communication, Gothic was invented twice over at an interval of a thousand years — undoubtedly by no means the least curious of the adventures of the human mind."

Under the Kushans, a new type of Buddhist monastic architecture also came into being in the northern region. Monastic buildings had hitherto been grouped somewhat at random around open-air stupas, the earliest Buddhist centers of worship. In the north, however, political conditions were never very stable and turbulent invaders were always a possibility. Monasteries, in consequence, began to assume the form of small fortified cities. The monks' cells were ranged in double-storied rows round three sides of an open courtyard and faced inward, so that only blank walls greeted the beholder from without. The fourth side of the courtyard was provided with a massive gate. The stupa, now of necessity reduced in size, was placed at one end of the open court, but to give it appropriate height it was built on a high platform in the shape of a series of superimposed drums. About the base were niches containing Buddha images separated by pilasters, and the dome was embellished with stucco garlands and festoons, gilded or painted in bright colors.

Minor stupas and chapels clustered around the main stupa, and from many of these, present-day archaeological researches have recovered fascinating documents. Near the back wall of a chapel associated with the great Dharmarajika stupa of Taxila, probably dating from Asoka's time but rebuilt and enlarged under the Kushans, has come to light in recent years a silver vase containing a gold casket with minute bone relics, and an inscribed silver scroll. The Kharoshthi inscription, with a date corresponding to A.D. 78, states that the accompanying relics were those of the Holy One, enshrined by the Bactrian Urasaka in his own Bodhisattva chapel for the bestowal of health, blessings

and honor on the Kushan king, parents and friends. Not far from the same find-spot, another chapel cell yielded a collection of glass tiles ten inches square, of a wonderful transparent azure blue, with a few black, white and yellow tiles intermingled. They probably once formed part of the pavement of the processional path around the main stupa. In describing these tiles, Sir John Marshall recalls the Chinese tradition that glassmaking was originally introduced into China from northern India.

The whole of the northern territory was rapidly transformed by Kushan zeal into a second Buddhist Holy Land. The Buddha was popularly believed to have transported himself thither through the air to work miracles, and incidents connected with his life as a Bodhisattva or with the lives of previous Buddhas were also transferred to northern sites. Numerous stupas rose up to commemorate these legends and to enshrine supposed relics, such as the stupa of his staff, the stupa of the begging-bowl, the stupa of the top bone of his skull, the stupa to commemorate the spot where as Bodhisattva he gave his eyes to a hungry tigress. On the back wall of a certain cave, it was asserted, his shadow could be seen by the eye of true faith, and the imprint of his garment on a rock, where the Blessed One had stopped one day to wash his yellow robe.

Some of the hill monasteries in the neighborhood of Taxila have preserved the evidence of how the flame of Buddhism was suddenly extinguished in northern India about the middle of the fifth century. Among charred ruins, amid tumbled heads of broken images and scattered weapons, startled excavators laid bare several skeletons in tortured attitudes, obviously of monks who once inhabited the monastery. With barbaric shouts and the loud trampling of horses' hoofs, the White Huns came and went by this route, like a gusty storm, rudely breaking the peace of the great monasteries and leaving death and ruin in their wake.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Indian South*

HISTORIES OF INDIA nearly always have a peculiar northern bias, and it is to be feared that the present one is no exception. South India and the great Deccan Plateau are sadly neglected, and the distinctive contributions of the Dravidian South to Hindu civilization as a whole are overlooked or given scant attention. This neglect of the historian is really due to no fault of his own, but to a series of circumstances over which he has no control.

No ancient archaeological site as important as Mohenjo-daro, for example, has yet been discovered in southern India, even though Mohenjo-daro itself may possibly represent a mainly Dravidian type of civilization. The early Aryans of the north were prolific thinkers and writers, and the background of their vast literature was invariably north India. Surviving literature in Tamil, the oldest Dravidian language, barely goes back beyond the beginning of the Christian Era, and Tamil itself has remained a formidable stumbling block for those not having it as their mother tongue. Work of translation has progressed all too slowly, with a resulting lack of balance in sources of information. Then, for centuries, the easiest route to reach India from western Asia was by way of the north, as it was also the earliest route of cultural exchange between India and eastern Asia. Hence Greeks and Chinese, responsible for filling in many a blank in the written history of India, concerned themselves almost exclusively with north India. Buddha, too, must share responsibility. He was a Northerner, and the land of his birth and ministry became a Holy Land to millions of Buddhists, in India and in all parts

of the world. The greatest Indian empires also first arose in the north. When these disintegrated or succumbed to foreign aggressors, the foreigners settled in the northern parts of India and established their seats of government there. Muslims ruled India from Delhi or Agra for six centuries. The British who succeeded them ruled from Calcutta and Delhi for two and a half centuries.

Dravidian-speaking people in prehistoric times spread over most of India, replacing the primitive inhabitants or forcing them to retreat to secluded parts of the country. When the Aryans appeared on the scene, they conquered the Dravidians and pressed them into the southern part of the peninsula. Within the Dravidian matrix of peninsular India, many primitive tribes managed to cling to their cultural and tribal identity. In spite of the more advanced civilization lapping at their islands of refuge in jungle or hill tract, the Bhils, the Gonds, the Todas — to name but three out of a hundred such tribes — still continue to live a life apart, speaking their own dialects, following their old tribal patterns, pursuing their own primitive economy, in so far as the destructive onrush of twentieth-century forces permits them to do. Most of these primitives are now wards of a benevolent government which sympathizes with them in their struggle for adjustment but has no real use for them. The cards are stacked against them, and at best they have but a few decades to survive inevitable absorption. Meanwhile, let the ethnologists hurry, if they wish to understand the earliest manifestations of group life as it must have been lived in ancient India.

Apart from tribal cultures, India within the past four or five thousand years has been the home of two great basic types of civilization, Aryan and Dravidian. In the centuries of their slow mingling and ultimate fusion, each did its best to resist extinction. Each contributed vital elements to the religious emphasis, the social structure, the manners and customs, the art symbolism, which makes up the Hindu civilization of today — one of the world's five living distinctive civilizations. If the tall fair-skinned Aryan of the north was the father of this civilization, the slender

dark Dravidian of the south was certainly its fertile mother.

Aryan penetration into south India had already taken place when south-Indian history, as such, begins. Even the mode and time of that penetration are largely guesswork. There is a tradition that the Vedic rishi Agastya — the great Aryan pioneer and pathfinder — crossed the Vindhya and planted Brahmin colonies in the Deccan and the far south, perhaps as early as 800 B.C. Statues of Agastya, with long beard, towering topknot and sacred thread descending across his mighty paunch, are revered in south India even today. They are the affectionate and loyal tribute of later ages to some dim memory of the past.

Whatever its circumstances, the Aryan advance southward seems to have been entirely peaceful. The proud Dravidian kings welcomed and honored the Brahmins and were soon sitting as receptive pupils at their feet. By this time the Aryans, assuming that they did originally enter India from outside, had been settled in the country for at least two thousand years, and were only as foreign to India as the English are foreign to England today, and of course far less foreign than the Americans are to the United States. They had already been deeply influenced by Dravidian ideas and forms of culture. The people of the Deccan and the south were no wild savages. They had great and prosperous cities, far-reaching trade connections, skilled industries, a highly developed musical system, fine poetry. The Brahmin intrusion from the north served to stimulate the Dravidian genius, which now reached its highest expression in literature and art, in enterprise and industry, in an imaginative and deeply emotional religious feeling, in a remarkable power of mathematical abstraction, in a well-developed village organization, and in the creation of magnificent, breath-taking temple cities, vast irrigation works and splendid sculpture in bronze, copper and stone.

Hindu civilization without the contributions of southern India would lack some of its most striking and dynamic qualities. The various Dravidian kingdoms of the historical period —

Pandya, Chola, Kerala, Pallava, in the far south, Andhra and Chalukya, in the Deccan — have each added brilliant pages to the annals of India.

The history of the Telugu-speaking Andhras of the Deccan begins later and ends earlier than the history of the three older Tamil-speaking kingdoms of southern India, Pandya, Chola and Kerala. With the breakup of the Mauryan Empire after the death of Asoka, the part which did not come under the yoke of foreign invaders was divided among three rival claimants. The central region passed into the hands of the Sungas, and after them of the Kanvas. In the east, Kalinga (the conquest of which had caused so much heartburning to Asoka) reasserted its independence and kept it until the time of the Guptas. The Deccan passed to the Andhras, who proceeded to carve out for themselves an important kingdom between the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Here their rule lasted for about four and a half centuries, from 225 B.C. up to A.D. 225. The Andhras were already known to the Greek ambassador Megasthenes in the time of Chandragupta Maurya and to Asoka. Their original homeland seems to have been the Telugu country between the deltas of the Godavari and the Krishna rivers, forming the northeastern part of what is today the province of Madras. They possessed thirty walled towns, and their earliest capital was Sri Kakulam, near the mouth of the Krishna. Later, Amaravati was their chief southern capital, and Paithan their capital in the west.

In the first or second century B.C., the Brahmin Simuka suddenly appeared on the western horizon of the Deccan and founded the new Satavahana Dynasty. Satavahana rulers presently extended their sway eastward, put an end to the remnants of Sunga power, exterminated the Kanvas, and merged their dynasty into that of the ancient Dravidian Andhras, whose territory they had overrun. Counting from the time of Simuka, the Puranic royal lists give the names of thirty Andhra kings, making no distinction between Satavahanas and Andhras. Dates are very uncertain, however, because the title of Satakarni is often

used in Andhra inscriptions without any personal name attached, and the puzzling Dravidian system of chronology records events not by fixed eras but by the sequence number of the fortnight of the particular season — hot, rainy or cold — of the regnal year of the individual king concerned.

One of the earliest inscriptions in which the name, or title, of Satakarni appears is found near Puri, in Orissa. This is a celebrated cave inscription of Khandagiri, singing in one hundred and seventeen lines the praises of one King Kharavela of Kalinga, who probably belonged to the second century B.C. The inscription states that Kharavela (otherwise unknown to Indian history) ascended the Kalinga throne at the age of twenty-four after completing his princely education in writing, mathematics, law and finance. He then carried out important works of public utility such as renovating and extending certain old irrigation canals and fought a number of successful campaigns. Satakarni is mentioned in connection with a war occurring in the second year of his reign. Kharavela invaded Magadha twice, overawing an unnamed Yavana general and compelling the Sunga king at Rajagriha to sue for peace and incidentally to return a famous Jain image which had been carried away from Kalinga by an earlier Magadha ruler. In the thirteenth year of his reign, Kharavela made war against the Tamil country of Pandya in the south, obtaining as the fruit of victory a substantial booty in horses, elephants, rubies and pearls. With this bit of information, the royal chronicle comes to an abrupt end, and nothing more is heard of the Kalinga king.

On the opposite side of India, in Maharashtra, at Nasik and Nanaghat, are other Satavahana inscriptions of about the same period. One of them asserts that Satakarni, son of Simuka, made extensive conquests and performed Vedic sacrifices. A later inscription in the name of the queen mother Balasri proudly boasts that her son Gotamiputra Satakarni, "the unique Brahmin," crushed the conceit of the Kshatriyas, properly expended the taxes levied in accordance with sacred law, restored the observ-

ance of caste rules, overthrew the Sakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas and re-established the glory of the Satavahana race. Gotamiputra thus figures as a great nationalist. It was he, indeed, who inflicted a crushing defeat on Nahapana, the Saka satrap of Nasik, and arrested the further advance of alien influence into the Deccan.

Defeat of the foreigners who were pressing southward was ultimately accomplished in another way, however. Gotamiputra's son married the daughter of Rudradaman, Saka or Pahlava satrap of Ujjain, in Malwa. Nahapana's daughter and her husband Ushavadata adopted the Hindu faith. A Nasik inscription records that Ushavadata granted sixteen villages to Brahmins, himself married into Brahmin families eight times, and annually fed one hundred thousand Brahmins. From the time of Rudradaman onward, all Saka satraps of Ujjain bear Indian names. On the same Girnar Rock in Kathiawar where Asoka's Fourteen Edicts are engraved is an inscription in Sanskrit prose of Rudradaman (A.D. 150), relating to repairs on the dam of an artificial lake originally excavated in the time of Asoka's grandfather, Chandragupta. It shows that in the Saka-Andhra lands of western India, Andhra culture, that is, the typical culture of the Deccan, had almost completely absorbed all foreign influences by the middle of the second century A.D.

The last great Andhra king was Yajna Sri Satakarni, whose rule lasted up to the end of this century. He greatly extended his conquests of territory, so that under him the Andhra kingdom stretched from sea to sea right across India. The western capital, Paithan, now a ruined site on the upper Godavari in Hyderabad, rivaled Amaravati in the southeast. Paithan was connected by a good road with Kalyan, the principal western port of the Deccan, and Andhra commanded a respectable share of the rich trade with Alexandria. One of Yajna Sri Satakarni's coins bears the device of a two-masted ship. He was probably the possessor of a considerable fleet of merchant vessels, for maintaining his sea-borne trade.

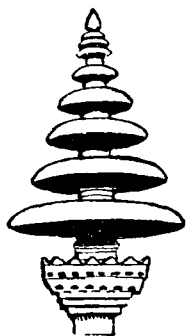
No reasonable explanation has yet been discovered for the abrupt collapse of Andhra rule early in the third century A.D. No destructive invasion or large-scale war is known to have occurred. All that is certain is that the Andhra power waned at this time, though the memory of greatness lingers on in the Andhra name, still popularly attached to that part of India where the Andhras once held sway. There is even talk of creating a new Andhra province in the future map of independent India.

After the disappearance of Andhra rule, various tribes such as the Abhiras and Nagas began to roam unchecked over the western Deccan. Then the Vakataka Dynasty asserted itself, until in the sixth century the Chalukyas gained ascendancy. The illustrious Pallavas (quite distinct from the Iranian Pahlavas of an earlier period in the north) became heirs to Andhran greatness in the southern and eastern part of their domain.

Andhra rulers seem to have been extraordinarily tolerant. They made no effort to substitute Sanskrit for the popular speech of the people. Their seventeenth king, Hala, is credited with the authorship, in the first or second century A.D., of a poetic work in the ancient Maharashtri language, consisting of seven hundred verses on love, the "Seven Centuries." One of Hala's ministers also produced a Sanskrit-Prakrit grammar and still another, Gunadhya, a collection of popular tales known as the *Brihat-katha*, Great Story Book. In matters of religion, Hindus, Jains and Buddhists were allowed equal freedom in the Andhra domain. Doubtless Hindu temples were built and endowed by royal gift, but strangely enough not a single Hindu temple earlier than the fourth or fifth century A.D. has survived anywhere in India. Marauding armies, hostile religionists or Time-the-great-leveler destroyed them all.

Fortunately, several Buddhist monuments, for which Andhra craftsmen and artists were mainly responsible, have survived the ravages of centuries, and perhaps they tell us more of the higher culture then existing in the Deccan than we could learn from any other source. Sanchi, Amaravati and Ajanta — what

names to conjure with! If India had produced only Sanchi, she would have established herself before the world as a land of supreme artistic genius. This genius first manifested itself in the Indian southland, where it burst into full flower in Andhra times. Compared with clumsy Gandharan art, the grace and beauty and spiritual quality of the artistic creations of the Andhras are superb.



Umbrella of stone from a Stupa.

The early Buddhist art tradition was centered in the stupa, or relic mound, probably derived from some prehistoric type of burial tumulus. As the chief object of early Buddhist worship, the stupa had already acquired all its characteristic features by the time of Asoka. It originally consisted of an uncovered mound in the form of a solid hemisphere made of large unburnt bricks, overlaid with earth or whitewashed plaster. A small railing and a finial in the symbolic form of the royal umbrella crowned the structure. Around the base, a massive circular wooden ground railing, with gateways or openings at the four cardinal points, marked off a broad path for monks and pilgrims to make their devotional turns, and a similar narrower terrace and railing often circled the drum of the stupa some little distance from the ground. A stone reliquary was invariably placed within the stupa, either near the top or at the floor level, and this usually contained a smaller receptacle of some precious

material like gold or crystal enshrining a bit of bone or ash, with offerings of gold flowers, pearls or other precious stones. The relics were at first those of Gotama Buddha, the Great Teacher, distributed by Asoka in the third century B.C., but in the course of time great disciples were also given relic stupas of their own, and stupas were also erected to mark various sacred Buddhist sites.

The first stage in the architectural development of this typical stupa layout was the substitution, in the late Mauryan or Sunga period, of stone for brick and wood. It was a simple matter to encase the original brick stupa with stone slabs and replace the wooden railings with stone. Stone was an excellent medium for carving, and so surfaces were now adorned with reliefs in the shape of small panels or medallions or floral borders. The Jataka stories, episodes connected with the life of the Buddha or the legendary lives of the previous Buddhas, and actual incidents of known Buddhist history, were chosen as fitting subjects for sculpture. Earliness or lateness of Buddhist works of art is determined by one invariable test. In all earlier sculpture, the figure of the Buddha himself never appears. His presence is indicated by one or another of the appropriate symbols.

Two carved ambulatory railings, one from Bharhut, near Allahabad (150 B.C.), and the other from Bodh-Gaya (100 B.C.), and a single Bharhut gateway, represent the earliest existing Buddhist sculptures apart from the art of Asoka's time, two centuries before. The Bharhut railing and gateway are now in the Indian Museum at Calcutta. A fragment of the Bodh-Gaya railing has been re-erected beside the present temple at Bodh-Gaya. This railing and the Bharhut gateway both bear Sunga inscriptions. The sculptured medallions of the Bharhut railing are of particular interest, because they have Brahmi titles identifying several of the Jataka stories and life episodes, such as the gifts to the Order of the Jetavana Park by the merchant Anathapindikā, the visit of Indra to the Holy One when he was meditating in the Indrasala Cave, or the arrival by night of Ajatasatru with

ways, both on the inner and outer faces, are completely covered with a magnificent series of sculptures in relief. They depict various Jataka stories, the Birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon and Death of Gotama Buddha (always without the figure of the Buddha), and historical events associated with Asoka and some of his pilgrimages. There are royal and relic processions emerging from fortified gates protecting picturesque moated cities intended to represent Rajagriha, Kapilavastu and Kusinagara. Asoka in one scene pays homage to the sacred Bodhi tree. There are numerous delightful village scenes, radiating the calm peace of Indian rural life. Village women wearing their hair loose, clad in short skirts and adorned with heavy anklets and armlets, husk and winnow their rice or make bread beside their open doorways. Clusters of beehive huts with conical roofs of thatch, leafy hermit dwellings and elaborate palaces with pillared halls are faithfully preserved in the Sanchi sculptures. Within the palaces, young bejeweled rajas are seen leaning in graceful postures, attended by lovely queens, and aristocratic little damsels peer from upper balconies and windows, to watch with vivid interest what goes on in the street below. For them, time is without meaning, and never are there any urgent, unpleasant duties to perform. Here the atmosphere is essentially one of luxury and cultured ease. There are wonderful forest scenes, too, in which the Bodhisattva as king of a mighty herd of elephants disports himself with dignity among his females and young, while a cruel hunter lies in wait to kill him at the bidding of the jealous queen of Benares. Or there is the moving episode of the Bodhisattva as the monkey king, making a sacrificial bridge of his own body to allow his monkey subjects to cross over in safety, making good their escape from the soldiers sent to shoot them by the king of Benares.

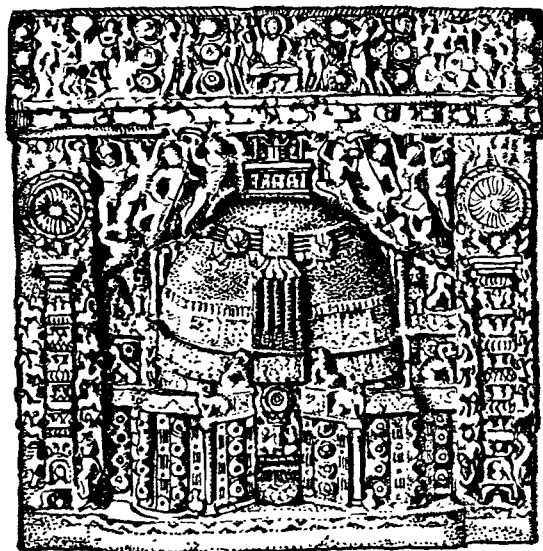
The whole contemporary Andhra world of city, village and wilderness, teeming with human, animal or floral life, lives again in the gray rain-washed stones of Sanchi, once tinted red. To a later age, it may seem strange that the ancient sculptors should

have selected a monument associated primarily with death, solemnly dedicated to one who preached the vanity of worldly pomp and pleasure, for depicting life in all its most humanly tender and lovely forms. Without a trace of vulgarity, the chiseled panels, intended to convey high moral teachings of the spirit of self-sacrifice, noble generosity and enduring faith, often present these through scenes of human love, physical beauty, and the performance of the small tasks of daily living. The Buddhist stories are visualized in contemporary settings and interiors, familiar to the artist-craftsmen responsible for the carvings. The life of the ancient Deccan, represented chiefly by neighboring Vidisa and its familiar fields and villages and people and animals, was transferred by local carvers with joyous self-confidence, simplicity and faith to the Sanchi stones.

Inscriptions on gateways and railings, as well as on many of the paving stones of the processional path, make it clear how the work was made possible by gifts from persons, individual artisans and guilds. A lute player, a banker, the foreman of the Andhra king Sri Satakarni, the ivoryworkers of Vidisa, are among those who have left a record of their donations. Specific gifts of money and the assignment of the income of certain villages to feed mendicants and maintain votive lamps are also recorded. The Great Stupa was a popular shrine to which offerings were gladly made by all, rich or humble.

The Andhra country in the delta of the Krishna was another early Buddhist art center, and numbers of stupas and other architectural remains survive in this region. The most important belong to Amaravati, Jaggayyapetta and Nagarjunikonda. The stupa at Nagarjunikonda, discovered little more than twenty years ago, shows a unique plan of construction not found in any northern Indian example. It was built in the form of a giant wheel, symbolizing the Wheel of the Law, or Doctrine, with hub, spokes and tire clearly indicated in the brickwork. An inscription says that this stupa was erected by the Princess Chantisi and that it was dedicated to the monks of Ceylon. The Indian

Buddhist Nagarjuna, who lived at the end of the second or early part of the third century A.D., is said to have passed the greater part of his life at this place. It was he who founded the Mahayana system of Buddhism afterwards so popular in northern lands.



### *Chaitya Slab from the Amaravati Stupa*

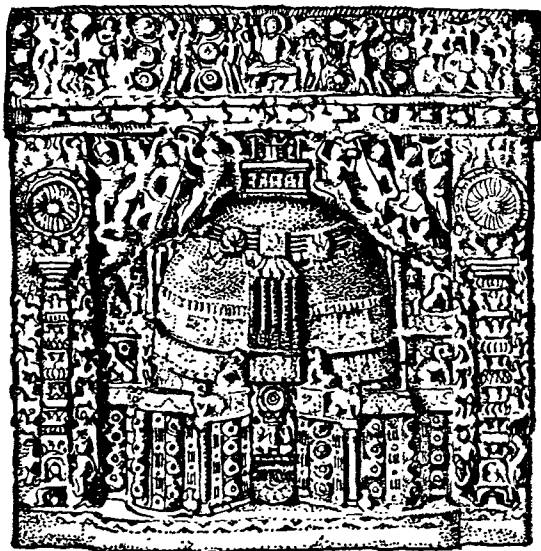
The Great Stupa of Amaravati, originally 192 feet in diameter (the Sanchi stupa is 120 feet), existed at the beginning of the nineteenth century but has since altogether disappeared. Fortunately, numerous carved white marble slabs, which once adorned the lower half of the great dome, have been dug out, and these now repose in the British Museum and the Madras Museum. Replicas of the stupa itself are carved on many of them, and so it is possible to have a fairly accurate idea of how it looked in the days of its glory. It was much more elaborate in appearance than the Sanchi stupa, due to the jewellike carving of its glistening white marble base, and the upper dome, of mud and lime

plaster, was decorated with a great necklace, or garland, in stucco relief, probably gilded or painted. The Amaravati stupa possessed one curious feature not known elsewhere. In place of the tall gateways, the circular ground railing was broken by four openings revealing the upper terrace around the dome of the stupa with its projecting balconies each supporting five pillars twenty feet high. It is thought by some that the pillars were a symbolic representation of the Five Celestial Buddhas.

The relief carvings of the Amaravati school range over a fairly wide interval, from about 200 B.C. to the third century A.D., and the transition from earlier to later art forms is clearly indicated by the presence or absence of the Buddha figure. Considerable development in technique is apparent by the end of the period. There is much greater freedom of movement than in the Sanchi carvings, and an almost infinite variety in the treatment of figures. They run or dance or fly or float through space with wonderful agility and grace. At the same time, the virile realism and the earnestness of the moral message, characteristic of early Indian art, have lost nothing in the Amaravati school. It would be hard to surpass in charm, for example, the little circular medallion from Amaravati which has been given the title of "The Taming of the Elephant." This depicts the drunken elephant set loose for the purpose of killing the Buddha by his jealous cousin, Devadatta. In the left half of the circle the elephant is dashing a helpless victim head downward against the pavement and at the same time trampling another underfoot, while the frightened inhabitants of the city run for safety or cling to each other, petrified and terror-struck. In the right half of the panel, the elephant bows in humble submission before the calm and majestic figure of the Blessed One, while the monks standing behind him observe the miracle with folded hands.

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When the first Buddhist stupas were beginning to receive their splendid stone embellishments, an entirely different kind of Indian religious architecture was also coming into being. This

was the architecture of rock-cut caves. In Orissa, at Khandagiri, Jain excavations took the form of oblong halls with pillared verandas. Some of them were double-storied, and one of the more famous in this group, the "Rani Gumpha," was provided with a large courtyard overlooked by broad stone terraces, where possibly religious plays were enacted. The sculptured frieze running around the walls of the upper story seems to have a distinctly dramatic character. One cell in this Jain group is curiously carved out of a jutting rock, in the form of a tiger with open jaws. The chamber inside is eight feet wide, six feet in depth but only three and a half feet in height. According to an inscription over the door, an anchorite named Sabhuti passed the whole of his life in this tiny retreat.

In the Western Ghats, north of Bombay, numerous groups of Buddhist excavations belong to approximately the same period — the caves of Bhaja, Kondane, Ajanta, Bedsa, Nasik and Karli. The earliest Buddhist excavations of this type consist of square viharas, or monasteries, with ranges of small individual cells opening out from them, and long, pillared *chaityas*, or worship halls, containing a solid stone stupa as an object of worship or meditation. For about four hundred years, from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, all of these rock-cut dwellings were occupied solely by communities of Hinayana monks. During the fifth century A.D., after Mahayana Buddhism had generally supplanted the earlier form, the very same caves were adapted to the requirements of new forms of worship by the excavation at the back of the viharas of additional chambers with large Buddhas sculptured from the solid rock. Until the close of the seventh century, Buddhists in India continued to build this unique type of monastic establishment.

Indian ascetics had always retired to natural rock caves in places of solitude, but artificially excavated caves date only from the Mauryan period, so far as is known. In the Barabar Hills, in the vicinity of Gaya, inscriptions of Asoka and his grandson Dasaratha tell us that certain caves were made here at royal cost

for ascetics belonging to the Ajivika sect of the Jains. These caves show the fine polish which was the distinctive characteristic of all Mauryan stonework. By the second century B.C., a veritable passion to scoop out swallowlike eyries in the vertical faces of lonely cliffs and gorges seems to have taken possession of the Buddhist monks all over India. Soon these Buddhist establishments had become incredible series of magnificent halls of gigantic size, decorated outside and inside with bas-reliefs and elaborately carved pillars and imposing statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and with beautiful frescoes covering their walls and ceilings.

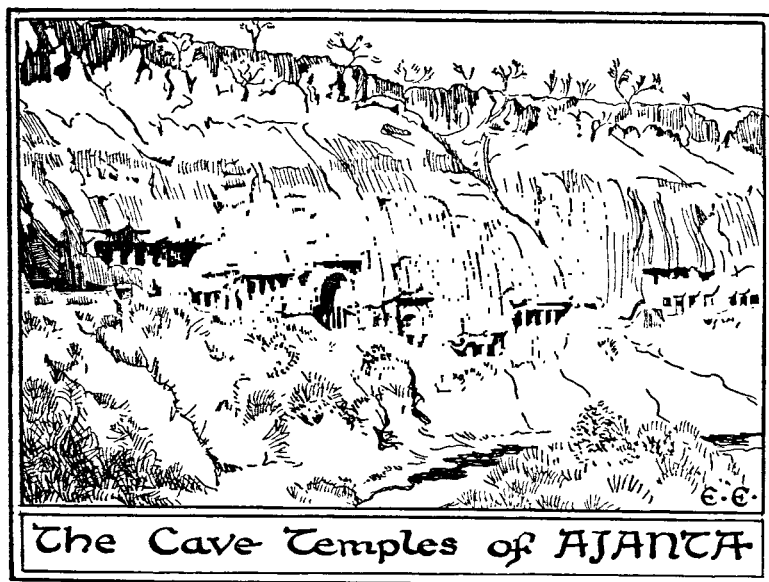
The Brahmins, too, caught the fever. At Elura, more popularly known as Ellora, in Hyderabad, twelve Buddhist, five Jain and sixteen Brahmin excavations, ranging in date from the fourth to the thirteenth centuries A.D., nestle side by side along the base of the tall cliff which overlooks a wide level plain, with the gleam of water in the distance.

Altogether, there are more than twelve hundred rock-cut temples and monastic halls and cells in different parts of India, but by far the greater number of them is located in the Western Ghats. The practice went on about a thousand years, finally dying out in medieval times. As the religious communities multiplied and required more space for accommodation, wherever possible new chambers were excavated at irregular intervals alongside or above or below the earlier ones. Rooms were connected by narrow zigzag ledges or stairs cut in the front face of the rock. One group at Nasik has twenty-three caves. Ajanta has twenty-nine. Kanheri, on Salsette Island near Bombay, has one hundred and nine!

The earliest Indian rock-cut temples and monasteries all faithfully copy the technique of wood-building. The stoneworkers appear to have started out as carpenters. With infinite labor, they chiseled from the solid rock courses of imitation beams along the barrel-shaped ceiling of their meditation halls. The great sun-windows were carefully given stone ribs within their em-

brasures, as if these could add strength. Artificial arcades with little balconies and casements and niches — a favorite decoration in relief on inner walls — show the joinings and railings of the ancient architectural style of wooden buildings. There can be no doubt that buildings with a framework of wood and bent bamboo, of the type represented in the Sanchi sculptures, served as the models for the first experimental rock-cut caves in India. Yet the master architects and engineers understood their fundamental problem of rock excavation, or their wonderful creations would not have endured for hundreds of years. Some of the Ajanta viharas are ninety feet square. The great chaitya at Karli is 124 feet long, 45½ feet wide and 46 feet high. The largest of the Buddhist cave structures at Ellora is three stories high, with a frontage of 112 feet and an average depth of 72 feet. It was certainly no small feat for Indian workmen to excavate from the solid rock chambers of such enormous size.

At Ajanta and elsewhere a few incomplete chambers reveal just how the workmen set about their difficult task. The outer face of the cliff was first cut back vertically to provide for a projecting courtyard — at times barely a ledge — and a columned porch to give access to the interior. The actual work of excavating commenced on the upper level, above the porch, through a central arched window. This window was designed to serve the double purpose of admitting light and permitting the accumulated stone debris to be thrown out from within. It was also the most important architectural feature of the façade. The interior cutting, performed with a pick, started at the ceiling and progressed downward, so that no scaffolding was necessary. The position and size of pillars for sustaining the immense weight of the stone roofs had to be carefully calculated in advance. The rock was then hewn out in such a way as to leave the massive stone columns standing free, but forming an integral part of floor and ceiling. Deep within the prayer halls, the solid stone stupas, somewhat elongated, rose austere from square platforms. Rows of pillars divided the central nave from the two



side aisles, and a processional path was thus formed, which led round the back of the stupa. In the individual monk's cells, stone beds and niches for reading lamps were provided. Stone cisterns were excavated for keeping the water supply cool. Stone tables were chiseled out in the refectories. For occasional moments of innocent diversion — not many, one may surmise — a *pachisi* game board was sometimes engraved in the floor of a room.

The rough excavation completed, picks were discarded for chisels and brushes. Now began the exquisite carving and painting. Many of the ordinary workmen were capable of transforming themselves into able craftsmen, but the best sculptors and artists of the day must also have been employed for the more important work. As shown by numbers of inscriptions in the Ajanta caves, rich patrons were responsible for the different viharas and chaityas, and they must have vied with one another to see who could produce the finest and most magnificent monastery. Pedestals, capitals and brackets were all elaborately sculptured. Friezes and ornamental borders around doorways and

windows were lovingly executed. Walls and ceilings and the flat sides of pillars were sculptured or covered with layers of mud, straw and plaster as a base for color work. Traces of very early paintings, darkened almost beyond recognition by time, still cling in patches to the dark interiors of certain caves. To the later Gupta period, however, belong the most magnificent of the Ajanta frescoes. This was the period when the image worship of Mahayana Buddhism was replacing the earlier stupa worship, and the interior ranges of cells were being converted into chapels and shrines for the worship of colossal Buddha images.

It was to such an environment of solitude and marvellous man-made beauty that Buddhist communities in India, in the centuries before and after the commencement of the Christian Era, retired from mundane concerns to live a life, not of slothful ease, but of strenuous endeavor. At Ajanta, the abbey caves and monasteries stretch in an irregular line for a third of a mile midway down the face of a crescent cliff overhanging a charming little stream. Below the old town of Ajanta, the stream cascades downward in seven leaping waterfalls. The earliest excavations, belonging to the second century B.C., are a group of two chaityas and three viharas. Then, after a long interval, twenty-four more caves were excavated, in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. One can imagine the old abbots in continual superintendence as the work slowly progressed, finally passing their judgment on the outlines sketched in red ocher for the frescoes which make Ajanta world-famous today. Students and novices must by that time have gathered from many parts of India, perhaps even from Ceylon or countries far beyond the Indian borders, for religious instruction at the Ajanta university. The atmosphere must have vibrated with a spirit of earnest study and intense devotion.

One closes one's eyes and imagines the hot glare of the brilliant Indian sunshine, or the monotonous drip of the monsoon rains. Within the gloom of a great cavern, a carved stupa is suddenly



Bodhisattva with the Blue Lotus. Vihara Cave 1. Ajanta



Flying Gandharvas from Gupta-period sculpture

illuminated by a shaft of light striking down through the sun-window, and yellow-robed monks move softly about on bare feet. At evening time, from the raised music chamber in the chaitya anteroom, comes the muffled thud of drums, and deep-toned trumpets call the monks to communal worship and meditation. The solemn procession passes slowly into the prayer hall and along the ambulatory passage, always keeping the stupa to the right, of course. The monks sit down cross-legged in long rows and resonantly intone the sacred Buddhist texts. Oil lamps flicker like a thousand fireflies and blue incense trails upward, losing itself in the shadowy vault. Gradually all voices cease. The figures begin to fade away, and only silence and emptiness remain. Wild bees are building their hives among the forgotten Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and bats flicker out and in, weaving patterns in the twilight. Occasionally simple cultivators or hunters, overtaken by storms or darkness, seek refuge for a night in the mysterious caves, lighting smoky fires to drive away prowling beasts . . . And once more change follows, upon change. The Buddhist sanctuary of Ajanta is accidentally re-

discovered within the territory now ruled by a Muslim prince. He employs many experts to make restitution and amends for the shameful neglect of the past. The caves are thoroughly cleansed, the frescoes restored. Electric lighting is supplied. To-day a fine motor road deposits curious visitors, guidebook in hand, at the foot of the deserted Ajanta cliff.

## CHAPTER IX

### *The Dravidian Matrix*

IT IS SURPRISING that no very early monuments of either artistic or historic importance, like those of Andhra in the Deccan, have come down from the more ancient Tamil kingdoms of seagirt south India — Pandya, Chola and Kerala (also sometimes known as Chera). By the seventh century A.D., the numerous Buddhist or Jain monasteries and temples which once existed here were nearly all deserted and in ruins. The stupendous masterpieces of Dravidian temple architecture seen today at Madura, Tanjor, Rameswaram, Srirangam and Chidambaram all belong to much later centuries. Yet there must certainly have been an unbroken continuity of Tamil tradition uniting the past and the present. Climate, wars and neglect seem to be the only explanation for the absence of early architectural remains in southern India. Yet if the more tangible monuments of the past are lacking, Sanskrit, Tamil, Jain and Buddhist literature, at any rate, afford glimpses of the rich cultural background and expression, as well as the customs and enterprising trade activities of the ancient Tamil-speaking Indians.

The first mention of the Tamil kingdoms is a reference to Chola and Pandya in the Sanskrit grammatical work of Katyayana, who lived in the fourth century B.C. Next in point of time, the *Artha Shastra* makes casual mention of the famous pearls of Pandya. Megasthenes, the Greek envoy to the Mauryan court, does himself an injustice by bequeathing to posterity a foolish fable about Pandaia, daughter of the god Herakles, who is supposed to have given her name to the southern country where she was born, and over which her amiable father gave her sover-

eignty. In this remarkable land, the Greek solemnly asserts, females at the age of six were quite capable of bearing children. Jain literary tradition mentions a Jain migration to the south in about 300 B.C. and a copy of Asoka's Fourteen Rock Edicts found near Madras shows that Mauryan influence, and Buddhism with it, had penetrated to this point by the third century B.C. Asoka specifically names Chola, Pandya, Keralaputra (Kerala) and a fourth region called Satiyaputra (probably adjoining Kerala), as friendly neighboring countries to which he dispatched missionaries to preach the Buddhist gospel of piety. So it is quite clear that by the time the inscriptional history of south India begins, in the middle of the third century B.C., Jainism and Buddhism had gained a footing there, and the Aryanizing process was well advanced.

From the Dravidian source material, one finds the most ancient past fitfully illuminated by records of very uncertain date. Of the dozen Dravidian languages, spoken by approximately one hundred million Indians today, the chief are Tamil, Malayalam, Kanarese and Telugu. Telugu, the principal language of the Deccan, is spoken by the greatest number. Malayalam, confined to the southwestern corner of India, is a late ninth-century language, a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit. Kanarese, the local speech of western Mysore, is considerably earlier. Tamil, the common language of the three ancient Dravidian kingdoms of the south, and the pre-eminent language of present-day Madras, is the oldest and purest of the Dravidian tongues, proved by the fact that it has the fewest Sanskrit words in its vocabulary. It also possesses the earliest vernacular literature of India, apart from Pali.

Nevertheless, the dating of Tamil literature is a hazardous affair. The Tamil alphabet did not evolve until as late as the seventh century A.D., and like the present alphabets of all languages in India not of direct foreign importation (as also of Tibetan, Burmese and Sinhalese), derives from Brahmi. The oldest deciphered records associated with any Dravidian lan-

guage are some inscriptions found in caves of the ancient Pandya country, in the extreme south. They are engraved in the Asokan Brahmi character, and seem to represent a mixed Prakrit and Dravidian dialect. Up to the fourth century A.D., the Brahmi script continued in general use all over India. Then local modifications began to emerge, and these modified scripts became the parents of all the various present-day Indian alphabets. No Tamil manuscript, therefore, can actually be very old. On the other hand, Tamil poetry, recited by bards at the courts of the Tamil kings, could easily have been handed down orally for centuries, long before it was written down. Nor is antiquity determined solely by survival. Tamil tradition says that once a large part of the Pandya country suddenly sank into the sea, carrying down with it beneath the waves all the accumulated riches of Tamil civilization.

A work of grammar is considered to be the oldest surviving work in Tamil. This is the *Tolkappiyam*, roughly assigned to a period about the beginning of the present era, on the basis of its language and syntax. Popular sentiment makes the author a disciple of the ancient Vedic rishi Agastya, who lived many centuries earlier. Like its Sanskrit predecessors, this Tamil grammar is a veritable encyclopedia of information. It discusses not only letters, words and sentence structure, but such diverse subjects as religion, love, the art of warfare, social and civil ideals and the four primary divisions of the people according to occupations determined by geographical features of hill, forest, coast or plain. Chieftains at first governed each class, but hereditary kings eventually arose from among the wealthy agriculturists who owned land but did not cultivate it with their own hands. Each main group had numerous subdivisions. The category of the coastal people of the Tamil land, for example, was divided into fishermen, pearl fishers, boatmen, makers of boats, salt makers, workers in shell and merchants engaged in foreign trade. An organization parallel to the caste system appears to

have existed in these territorial and economic divisions of Dravidian society, but actually there does not seem to have been any rigid binding by birth to an inherited work. Caste was an Aryan, not a Dravidian, invention, and was imposed on the south by the north. In south India today only three main social divisions have any significance — Brahmins, Sudras and "Untouchables." Brahmins, who constitute only about 4 per cent of the population, are the intellectual aristocrats. Sudras, who make up the vast majority, have a respectable status, much higher than that of Sudras in the north. The Depressed Classes, on the other hand, have been pushed down in southwestern India to their lowest level.

Madura, which became the Pandyan capital in succession to the ancient coastal towns of Korkai and Kayal, which gradually dwindled in importance owing to the silting up of the river on which they were situated, early acquired great fame as a Tamil literary center. Three great *sangams*, or literary academies, are supposed to have flourished there in early times over which Brahmins, as the custodians of learning, often presided. The last sangam disappeared in the second century A.D., after setting its seal of approval on a number of Tamil works, now commonly referred to as the sangam classics. These include eight Tamil anthologies containing more than two thousand poems by four hundred and forty-nine different poets, a collection of ten long idylls and eighteen lesser works. Some of the latter may possibly belong to a later period.

It is scarcely possible to give even a bare summary of the contents of early Tamil literature. Hero worship, love, devotion to duty, ethical teachings, honor and friendship form favorite themes. Three of the eight classical anthologies consist of four hundred love poems each, and one contains four hundred heroic poems in praise of Madura, together with fifty lyrics. A fifth anthology has twenty-two poems in praise of Madura and other cities and places. Eighty-eight poems about eight Kerala kings

and a collection of five hundred short miscellaneous verses make up the seventh and eighth anthologies. The ten idylls range over an equally wide field.

Like Sanskrit, Tamil has its twin epics, the *Silappadikaram* and its sequel the *Manimekalai*. The first was composed by a monk-brother of a Chera king in the first or second century A.D. It has for its theme the love of a wealthy young merchant for a beautiful dancer, and the sorrows and ultimate self-sacrifice of the faithful wife. The second epic continues the story of the dancer's daughter, Manimekalai, and relates how, after hearing religious truths expounded by teachers of various schools, she finally embraces Buddhism. It is in the wealth of their exact descriptive details that these epics provide a wonderful mirror of early Tamil times. On the basis of an account contained in the *Silappadikaram*, it has even been possible for scholars to reconstruct an entire ancient system of south-Indian music, a system which had died out after the twelfth century.

Among all the Tamil classics, the most popular is one of the eighteen shorter works, the *Kural*, by Tiruvalluvar, a poet of great genius who probably lived in the first century A.D. In terse couplets in which the rhyme, as in all Tamil poetry, is found at the beginning instead of the end of a line, the philosopher-author brings his shrewd experience and pointed wisdom to bear on ethical values and problems of his day. The *Kural* is the most beloved and most widely read book in the whole of south India. Tamil children begin their education by memorizing its verses.

Tamil kings were constantly at war with one another, and often with the rulers of the neighboring island of Ceylon. The fortunes of war swayed this way or that, and all three southern kingdoms suffered eclipse for several centuries under the militant Pallavas who appear to have been intruders from the north, and who succeeded in firmly establishing themselves in the third century A.D. in eastern Chola territory, with the old Chola city of Kanchi, or Conjeeveram, as their capital. By the beginning

of the seventh century, the Pallavas had become undisputed masters of the Tamil lands, a position they maintained until they were finally worn down by exhausting wars with the Chaluhyas of the western Deccan, in the ninth century. But through all such vicissitudes, trade went on, and the people as a whole enjoyed a high degree of prosperity. Pandya held the monopoly of such valued articles as pearls and beryls, and Pandya and Kerala shared between them the rich trade in spices — above all, in pepper. The demand for pearls and pepper was steady, and while the Tamil armies fought valiant, bitter wars among themselves or with their Pallava or Sinhalese neighbors, Tamil merchants quietly continued to trade with one another and with distant countries of West and East, including the innumerable islands of the Indian Ocean, and even of the vast Pacific.

The First Book of the Kings in the Old Testament narrates how Hiram, king of Tyre, sent his ships from Ezion-Geber on the Red Sea to Ophir, to fetch back ivory, apes, peacocks, gold, almug trees and precious stones for his friend Solomon, who was building the Great Temple at Jerusalem. It has been suggested that Ophir was perhaps the ancient port of Sophir, or Sopara, near Bombay. Wherever it was, the Biblical articles of commerce, in 1000 B.C., seem to have been chiefly of Indian origin. The ancient Hebrew names for peacock and aloes bear a strong resemblance to the Tamil, and the Greek (and English) names for such common articles as rice, ginger and pepper, are also unquestionably of Tamil derivation. Mummies in Egyptian tombs wrapped in indigo-dyed cotton cloth from India, precious woods from Indian forests used by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, for his palaces and temples of the sixth century B.C., prove the antiquity of Indian trade with the West.

After the possibilities of monsoon navigation had become known to the Alexandrian Greeks in the first century A.D., and the straight run to the south-Indian ports had become the easiest way to India, a great increase in trade rapidly followed. The *Periplus* and Ptolemy's *Geography* reflect Rome's insatiable de-

mand for precious stones and pepper, which soon brought a fortune to southern India. Besides pearls from the pearl beds of the Manar Gulf, lying between the mainland and Ceylon, Pandya supplied beryls from the rich mines near Madura. These multicolored stones, which included the lovely transparent sea-green aquamarines, were immensely popular in Europe for seals and cameos. But in the early days the Tamil south had little taste for anything Europe could offer in exchange, except gold, and so gold had to pay for most of the Indian goods. Roman gold coins have turned up in astonishing quantities along the Malabar Coast, around Madura and at other places in the south. One such treasure trove consisted of "five coolie loads." Most of the coins belong to the reigns of the first five Roman emperors. A unique example among them is a coin of the Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54), struck to commemorate the Roman conquest of Britain. Unlike the Kushans, who used to melt down the Roman gold and recast it under their own names, the Tamils did not bother to mint any currency of their own, but freely made use of Roman coins for their own general trading purposes.

Tamil poetry has preserved several interesting references to the "beautiful large Yavana ships" which used to come riding into the Kerala port of Muzuris or the Pandyan ports of Nylkynda and Barake, bringing Greek wine and gold and taking away pepper and spices and precious stones. These Alexandrian ships had to carry an escort of armed soldiers as a protection against pirates, and some of the adventurous foreigners elected to remain behind and hire themselves out as palace mercenaries to Tamil kings. One Tamil poem tells how the tent of a certain Pandyan king was "guarded by powerful Yavanas, whose stern looks strike terror into every beholder, while dumb Mlecchas, clad in complete armor, who could express themselves only by gestures, kept close watch throughout the night." Of course, these "dumb Mlecchas" were dumb only because they spoke Latin or Greek, not Tamil. Roman colonies were actually established at Muziris and Madura, and a temple to Augustus

existed at one time in the former place. Foreign colonists also found their way to the Coromandel Coast of the Chola country. The greatest of Chola ports was Puhar, situated at the mouth of the Kaveri. It was divided into two parts. One adjoined the seacoast, and the other, consisting of the palace and residential quarters, lay westward of the central market place. A vivid passage in Tamil describes the beach town of docks and warehouses, with the settlements of foreign traders from beyond the seas, all speaking their "various tongues."

A curious memento of southern India's early foreign contacts is a second-century papyrus manuscript of a Greek farce found in Egypt. It has for its theme the adventure of a Greek lady shipwrecked off the west coast of India. A conversation in an apparently unintelligible jargon between the "King of the Indians" and some of his retinue is rendered into Greek by one of the characters in the play. Translated back from Greek, the mysterious language has lately been found to be a Greek attempt at recording Kanarese.

Besides the Alexandrians, colonies of other strangers found their way to south India, as refugees or traders, in the early centuries of the Christian Era. Jews and Syrian Christians, escaping from Roman persecution, both arrived in the first century. Persian Christians fleeing from Sassanid persecution arrived in the fourth. Arabs also began to settle in considerable numbers along the Malabar Coast, and their descendants formed the Moplah community, which is still an important element in the population of Malabar. A sixth-century work, *Christian Topography*, by a Greek monk known as Kosmos Indiko Pleustes, gives an account of his visit to south India and Ceylon, and the progress of the early Christian communities in India. According to Kosmos, they belonged to the Persian or Nestorian Church, and their dignitaries were all appointed from Persia. Old stone crosses with inscriptions in Pehlevi, or Old Persian, presumably dating from the sixth or seventh centuries, have been found fairly widely distributed over the south of India, from Madras to

Malabar. The Malabar Church even today continues to use Syriac as its liturgical language.

Jews, Syrians and Arabs have always borne a reputation for being shrewd traders. A time came when Indian commerce with Rome began to fall off, and it is not surprising that these enterprising foreigners, now settled in most of the ports along the coast, gradually gained control of the profitable pepper export. From the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, the pepper caravans were soon going overland to Antioch and Constantinople, where equally enterprising Italian merchants bought the valuable produce and took it away to Venice and Genoa.

Less familiar is India's extensive early pepper traffic with China. Cargoes for the China-India trade were carried both by Chinese junks and Indian sailing ships. A classification of the various types of Indian ships has been preserved in a Sanskrit history of ancient Indian shipping. It mentions ten types of ships engaged in river traffic and fifteen types of seagoing vessels, each type bearing a name of its own. The large size of some of them is frequently referred to in early Indian and Chinese literature. In the thirteenth century, Marco Polo says that the size of ships was measured by the number of baskets of pepper they could carry! Ships carrying five to six thousand baskets of pepper required crews of two hundred or more sailors.

As far back as history can probe, there seems to have been no time when south India was not in contact with a number of foreign lands by way of the sea, but here in the south, unlike the north, no foreigners came as conquerors to disturb the normal life of the people until the fourteenth century. This made possible an integrated cultural life, with no major break of any sort, and even today the old traditions of Hindu culture are more vital in southern India than in any other part of the land. There were, of course, differences to be bridged between Dravidian and Aryan, Tamil and Sanskrit cultures, but this fusion had already been largely accomplished, without any bitter struggle, before the recorded history of south India begins.

The political history of the south is a complicated narrative of the rise and fall of many rival dynasties, often extremely hard to disentangle. The three early kingdoms of Pandya, Chola and Kerala temporarily fell into subjection under the Pallavas, who appear suddenly on the scene at the end of the third century and disappear almost as suddenly in the tenth. In Tamil, the name means robber, or rascal, but the origin of the Pallavas is still mostly guesswork. As a matter of fact, it is only just over a hundred years since the discovery of some of their copperplate grants first brought them to the notice of modern historians of India.

By the beginning of the seventh century, it is now known, the Pallava kings had become masters of the Tamil country. Though the ancient kingdoms continued to survive, they were forced to recognize Pallava overlordship, exercised from the old Chola city of Kanchi, close to Madras. A Pallava naval expedition was even able to interfere in the dynastic affairs of Ceylon, effecting the installation of a refugee Sinhalese prince who had fled to Kanchi, and whose cause the Pallava king espoused. But from the seventh century began a long-drawn-out series of wars with the powerful Chalukyan rulers who had recently arisen in the western Deccan. The period of these wars marks the second phase of Pallava history, and in the end they brought about a state of exhaustion which made it easy for the Cholas, in the last decade of the ninth century, to revive their former power and annihilate the Pallavas.

New dynasties were also fighting their way to prominence in the southwest of the Indian peninsula. About the middle of the fourth century, the greater part of what is now Mysore State came under the rule of the Ganga Dynasty. After suffering eclipse at the time of Chalukyan expansion, the Gangas again became powerful in the ninth and tenth centuries. An eastern branch of the Gangas ruled in Orissa for nearly a thousand years, from the sixth to the sixteenth century.

Still another minor dynasty was that of the Kadambas. They

emerged in the fourth century but were extinguished by the Chalukyas in the sixth. The founder of this dynasty was a young Brahmin who had gone as a mendicant student to Kanchi, then the Pallava capital, to complete his studies at one of the Vedic colleges there. Receiving some insult from a Pallava horseman, the fiery youth fled away into the great Deccan forest and collected a resolute band of followers to attack the Pallavas at every opportunity. So effective were his attacks that the Pallava king finally not only made peace with him, but bestowed upon him a substantial kingdom bordering the western sea, the part of India now called the Konkan. The Kadamba capital was the ancient forest city of Vanavasi, one of those southern cities to which, seven hundred years before, Asoka had sent some of his Buddhist missionaries.

Most powerful among the western kingdoms which arose in the centuries following the disappearance of Andhra rule in the Deccan was the Chalukya kingdom. The origin of the Chalukyas, like the Pallavas, is still obscure, but they were probably of northern extraction. About the middle of the sixth century, they imposed themselves on the Dravidian inhabitants in the territory around the headwaters of the Krishna, in what is now Maharashtra, and set up a capital for themselves at Vatapi (Badami). The most formidable of the Chalukyan rulers was Pulakesin II (608-642). A few years after his accession Harsha Vardhana, the greatest contemporary ruler in northern India, attempted an invasion of the Deccan. He was roundly defeated by Pulakesin, whose fame as a result spread even beyond the borders of India. Khusru II, king of Persia, sent an embassy to the Chalukyan court in 625, and Chalukyan ambassadors were also favorably received at the distant Persian court.

Pulakesin's campaigns carried his victorious arms north into Gujarat and Malwa as well as east into the Pallava domain. He succeeded in wresting from the Pallava king Mahendravarman I (600-630) the province of Vengi, which lay between the deltas

of the Krishna and Godavari. Pulakesin's younger brother was appointed viceroy of Vengi, but he soon revolted and set up an independent dynasty. This eastern Chalukya Dynasty of Vengi continued to flourish for five hundred years, until it was finally absorbed by the imperial Cholas.

The tide of war between the western Chalukyas and the Pallavas brought victory first to one side and then the other. Pulakesin boasts in one of his inscriptions of how the Pallava lord was made to "conceal his valor behind the ramparts of Kanchi, enveloped in the dust of his armies." The next Pallava king, however, Narasimha-varman I (630-668), sent an army straight across the peninsula to besiege the Chalukyan capital. Vatapi fell in 642, and in this battle Pulakesin lost his life. The exultant Pallavas slaughtered most of the inhabitants of the city and destroyed everything they could lay hands on. But Chalukyan kings took Kanchi at the end of the seventh century, and again in the eighth, though the occupation did not last long. According to a Pallava inscription, one of these invading Chalukyan kings was driven off with "only a rag" left to cover himself!

By the middle of the eighth century the western Chalukyas suffered a serious reverse. They were vanquished by their feudatories, the Rashtrakutas, and for the next two centuries the Kanarese-speaking Rashtrakutas were in the position of chief power in western India, where they ruled from Malkhed, on the Krishna, making swift excursions far afield. An Arab writer of the ninth century was so impressed by the power of the Rashtrakuta king that he named him one of the four great sovereigns of the world, the other three being the Khalif of Baghdad, the Emperor of Constantinople and the Emperor of China! By a reverse of fortunes in the tenth century, the Chalukyas put down the Rashtrakutas, once more recovered most of their former glory, and wielded power for another two centuries. In this final period they are known as the Later Western Chalukyas or the Western Chalukyas of Kalyana, to distinguish them from

the Western Chalukyas of Vatapi and the Eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. Altogether, Chalukyan power was a formidable reality in the Deccan for six and a half centuries.

Before the Chalukyan star had finally waned in the western Deccan, the Tamil Cholas had again become supreme in the east and south. After long eclipse in the ninth century, the Chola kings suddenly took possession of the Pallava and Pandya territories. Then, in the next century, they came into disastrous conflict with the Rashtrakutas, one of whose kings occupied Kanchi and the Chola capital of Tanjor, and even advanced as far as Rameswaram at the tip of India. The Cholas did not long have to endure the humiliation of this defeat, however, for with the accession of Rajaraja I (985-1014) the great period of Chola expansion was ushered in.

This ruler lost no time in creating a Tamil empire, using both his armies and his fleet for the purpose. Rajaraja began by destroying the fleet of the Cheras of Malabar. He then sent his own fleet to Ceylon and annexed the northern half of that island. Next he proceeded to conquer the Ganga realm of Mysore, and after that moved his armies northward. He occupied much of the Chalukyan territory and pushed on into Kalinga. The powerful Chola fleet also captured "the old islands of the sea, numbering 12,000," the groups known today as the Laccadives and the Maldives, in the south-Arabian Sea.

Rajaraja's son Rajendra I (1014-1044) continued his father's conquests. His first success was his annexation of the whole of Ceylon. He then conducted a brilliant campaign in the north, carrying his triumphant arms as far as the Ganges, subjugating Orissa and large parts of Bihar and Bengal. He, too, is credited with overseas expeditions. His ships crossed the Bay of Bengal to Burma, and on the way back annexed the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Rajendra and other Chola kings are mentioned in a contemporary Chinese work as having sent embassies to China, one of them consisting of seventy-two "ambassadors," more probably enterprising Tamil traders.

Later Chola kings found themselves increasingly embroiled with rebellions in one or another part of the wide-flung Chola Empire, and they also had to fight off the Chalukyas. It was not long before Ceylon, Pandya and other territories began to shake themselves free, and early in the thirteenth century Pandya entered upon a brief but glorious period of recovery. One of the Pandyan kings took Tanjor and made a prisoner of the Chola king, who ultimately succeeded in regaining his liberty with the help of the Hoysalas, onetime feudatories of the Western Chalukyas of Kalyana, who in the first half of the eleventh century carved out a small kingdom of their own in Mysore. The Chola kingdom finally received its deathblow at the hands of one of the Pandyan kings, Jatavarman Sundara (1251-1272), under whom Pandya once more assumed the dominant position in the Tamil country. Scions of the Pandyan Dynasty lingered on, maintaining a feeble existence well into the sixteenth century, even when Muslim armies marched south after three centuries of devastation in northern India and struck at Madura, the Pandyan capital, in 1310, with keen-edged glittering swords. Nevertheless, the death warrant of the old Tamil kingdoms of southern India had already been signed.

Had it not been for the deeply rooted Indian ideas of division of labor, it is difficult to see how through all this incessant warfare even the semblance of a stabilized civilization could have continued to exist century after century. Fighting was the work of the professional fighting classes, who were after all only a small fraction of the population. Peasants, craftsmen and Brahmins were traditionally out of it. Nor were the Indian wars as destructive as those waged against India by outsiders. Villages and temples were spared, and victory was celebrated when one side captured the royal city of the other. Even the defeated king was often allowed to go on ruling, provided he acknowledged the victor as his overlord and agreed to pay tribute to him. This explains how it was possible, despite the endless wars, for literary, artistic and religious activities to be carried on continuously un-

der Pandyans and Pallavas, Cholas, Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas, as well as the Andhras and many lesser dynasties of the Deccan and southern India. This civilization of the south was quite as vigorous and fruitful and typical as the great Gupta civilization of contemporary centuries in the north.

The people in general were given a satisfying opportunity for self-expression. They took a responsible and honorable part in the administration of their own affairs. Way back in imperial Mauryan times, Megasthenes had been struck by what he had heard of the restraining power of the popular assemblies in the southern lands. Originating, perhaps, as a form of clan government, the general assembly in ancient India became a recognized institution, and its wishes in relation to all matters of local management were respected by kings and ministers alike. There were not only village and district assemblies; caste assemblies and assemblies of professional groups, or guilds, also came into being. In northern and western India, the usual type of village was the *ryotwari*, in which land was individually owned and cultivated, except for a common grazing ground, and here a council of elders was made responsible for the conduct of affairs. Northern India also produced the one-caste type of village, particularly Brahmin villages. Another type of village seems to have existed only in the south. In such villages, all the land was the joint property of a body of landlords, and an elected assembly and numerous committees looked after the affairs of the community as a whole.

Pallava, Pandya and Chola inscriptions of the tenth and eleventh centuries give an excellent idea of the efficient rural democracy and local self-government then existing in south India. The system itself was obviously very much older. Qualifications for election to a village assembly or committee were a share in the land, a good character and some knowledge of traditional Hindu law. Names of suitable candidates were placed in a jar and drawn by lot, and office was held for one year. Failure to render proper accounts or other misconduct justified

removal from office. Women also could be members of these elected bodies. The committees were responsible for managing nearly every department of the community life, social, religious and economic. Among committees whose names have been specifically recorded in inscriptions were those in charge of gardens, irrigation, fields, land survey, village servants, justice, fines, the collection and payment of taxes, money, temples and charities.

As Hindu temples in the south multiplied and grew enormously in size, the temple management became a very complicated affair, demanding a high degree of efficient organization. Numbers of temple grants which have survived give an excellent idea of the intricate problem of maintaining these large temples. Lands, and sometimes whole villages, were customarily assigned by the king and other rich donors for the temple support. Gold, jewels and animals, as well as the revenue derived from such humble sources as a simple oil mill or a salt pan, were also bestowed by pious individuals. Such contributions were made for the service of the particular deity enshrined within the temple, for the general upkeep of the establishment, and for charitable works maintained by the temple. Apart from its quota of Brahmin priests and its general manager, every temple also had to have its own treasurer. A regular staff of musicians, singers, parasol-bearers, lamplighters, washermen, potters, astrologers, cooks, gardeners, carpenters, barbers, actors and dancing girls also formed part of the temple institution. The dancing girls — *devadasis*, servants of the Lord — were usually dedicated as children to the service of the deity, and were trained to perform religious dances inside the temple. In time this custom inevitably developed its own peculiar abuses, and recent reforms have swept the devadasis out of the temples. Actors also performed religious dramas in the temple assembly halls. Schools and colleges were frequently attached to the Hindu temple institution, and there were numerous charitable departments for tending the sick and feeding the destitute. The feeding of Brahmins and religious

devotees was considered especially meritorious, and many donations were earmarked for this purpose. The number of persons fed might range from fifteen to a thousand, and the feeding might be a daily affair or take place on some stipulated occasion.

The most popular gift to a temple, judged by the number of inscriptions, was the maintenance of a lamp. This required a substantial donation of animals from whose milk the *ghi*, to be used as oil, could be made. Ninety sheep or goats, twenty-five to thirty cows, five to six buffaloes, would maintain one perpetual lamp. Some grants mention the donation of only enough animals to maintain a half-lamp. Food to be offered to the deity (afterwards in part eaten by the priests and in part distributed to pilgrims and the poor) was another popular donation, and exact amounts of rice, curds, pulses, spices, vegetables, sugar, salt — and perhaps even the firewood to prepare the food — are mentioned in grants. Or again, there was the bath of the deity, a regular feature of the temple ritual. Though three pots of water might serve for ordinary days, there were occasions when many more were provided for the image. The bath might also consist of honey, ghi and curds, instead of water. Further requirements of the temple paraphernalia consisted of flowers, incense, sandal paste, camphor, all sorts of vessels, fly whisks and parasols. One inscription records the daily supply on the part of a certain devotee of one thousand lotuses. Another mentions a garland six spans long, to be daily presented at a particular temple. Valuable ornaments were also given to the deities, and the amount of these in the possession of a temple largely determined its wealth. A dedicatory inscription from Tanjor describes the gold crown of the deity of that famous Chola temple, and states that it contained 859 diamonds, 309 rubies and 669 pearls!

In the first century B.C., thousands of Buddhist monks lived in Pandya, Kerala and Chola monasteries. A few centuries later, the southern Buddhist monasteries had almost everywhere fallen into neglect and ruin. Only at Kanchi was Buddhism still flourishing as late as the seventh century. In the western Deccan,

Buddhism continued to prosper for some time, though the monastic communities had increasingly come to favor lonely retreats like Ajanta, and the gulf between monks and lay people was now rapidly widening.

Jainism, on the other hand, maintained its hold in the south longer than Buddhism. Many of the early Pandyan kings followed the Jain faith, but in the eighth century one of them was converted to Hinduism, and Madura witnessed a terrible persecution, in which no fewer than eight thousand Jains are said to have perished. Driven out of the south, Jainism then found a temporary place of refuge in Mysore, under the Gangas, and in Gujarat. Yet by the twelfth century, Jainism, too, was a languishing religion.

The spread of Hinduism in the south was intimately connected with the appearance in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries of numbers of saints, who began to walk the Tamil country singing devotional songs in honor of Vishnu and Shiva. The Buddhists with their keen logic were busy explaining and proving their philosophic doctrines by cogent reasoning. Perhaps the method of argument and debate had become too dry. One argument could always be overthrown by another. But a singing saint had only to appeal to the emotions of his hearers to achieve miracles of conversion. These Tamil singers came from every walk of life. Among them were kings, outcastes and women. Minstrels of the Lord, touched by divine grace, they sang in Tamil, the common tongue of the people, praising God and pouring out their devotion for him in ecstatic verses. The burden of their message was that the path of Bhakti, or devotion, is open to all. Complicated Vedic rites were never meant for the lower castes or for women. The path of Jnana, knowledge, and Yoga, disciplined meditation, were exceedingly hard to tread. But all might freely enter the path of devotion. Desire for liberation from material ties and loving self-surrender to the concept of a personal God were the sole requirements.

The Tamil saints sang the praises of Vishnu or Shiva in almost

identical words. Worshippers of Vishnu or any of his divine incarnations were called Vaishnavas. Worshippers of Shiva were Saivas. The Vaishnava *alvars*, as they are named, were twelve in number. A collection of four thousand of their hymns and psalms, the *Prabandha*, is to this day recited as part of the regular services in the great Vishnu temples of south India. The greatest of these Vaishnava saints was Nammalvar. He was born in the Pandya country, of the farmer caste, but was a mystic from childhood, and at sixteen was composing his inspired poems. His four chief works are popularly called the four Tamil Vedas. Another of the great alvars was a woman, Goda, also known as Andal, whose verses have deep emotional intensity. Refusing to marry, she spent her life in devotion to Krishna. Still another Vaishnava poet-saint occupied himself in making garlands for images of the deity. Also numbered among the Vaishnava saints was a king of Malabar, Kulasekhara, who renounced his throne and retired to live a life of voluntary poverty at the great Vaishnava temple of Srirangam, close to Trichinopoly. The last of the twelve alvars was Tirumangai, who performed many charitable works. He set himself to collect funds for the Srirangam temple, and did not disdain to rob the rich on the road to attain his pious purpose.

The official list of the Tamil Saivites numbered sixty-three early saints. Four in particular, Appar, Sambandha, Sundaramurti and Manikka Vachaka, are the *acharyas*, or teachers, who stand out for their contributions to Saiva devotional literature. Appar and his younger contemporary, Sambandha, both lived during the reign of the Pallava king, Mahendravarman I, in the first half of the seventh century. They were close friends, and it was the young Sambandha who affectionately bestowed on the elder saint the name of Appar, "Father," by which he was afterwards known. Appar was born near Kanchi. He was first attracted to the Jain faith, but later became an ardent devotee of Shiva. For this he suffered persecution under the Pallava king, but his fortitude so impressed Mahendravarman that the

king himself was soon afterwards converted to Saivism. Appar chose to live in extreme simplicity. His only garment was a loin-cloth, his only possession a small tool for weeding temple gardens—a work he took upon himself to perform with zeal wherever he went, as an act of humble service to God. His soul-stirring devotional songs won him many followers.

The child saint Sambandha was a Brahmin by birth. At the age of three, he was already possessed by visions of Shiva and Parvati, and had begun to sing mystic songs. Then as a boy he started walking from village to village, moving all hearts with his beautiful lyrics. Sambandha recognized no caste among the devotees of the Lord. When an untouchable harp player and his wife attached themselves to him, he joyously allowed them to accompany him on all his tours. When Sambandha died at the youthful age of eighteen, he had already composed hundreds of hymns. Three hundred and eighty-five of them have survived.

Sundaramurti, third of the Saiva Acharyas, like Appar, was born near Kanchi. Although he came from a family of Saiva priests, he was actually brought up in the Pallava palace. Adopting a life of renunciation while still a youth, he began to travel from place to place, singing his divine message that Shiva was God of Gods. A time came, however, when he fell in love with and married a non-Brahmin girl, but he soon discovered that his bond of intimacy with the Lord had been broken. He left his wife and suddenly went blind. This affliction he accepted as divine chastisement. After suffering untold physical and mental agonies, he at last regained his religious serenity, and tradition says that his eyesight was also miraculously restored. Seven volumes of the hymns of Appar, Sambandha and Sundaramurti have been brought together in a collection called the *Devaram*, which is to the Saivites what the *Prabandha* is to the Vaishnavites.

The fourth great Saiva saint was Manikka Vachaka. His great learning won for him the appointment of chief minister to the Pandyan king of Madura. But statecraft was not his true career. Upon an occasion when he was sent to buy horses for the Pan-

dyan army, he chanced to meet his *guru*, or spiritual teacher. The money for horses was promptly appropriated for building a temple, and the official disgrace swiftly meted out gave Manikka Vachaka the opportunity he craved to lead a religious life. He wandered from shrine to shrine, debated with Buddhists and Jains, lost himself in meditation, chanted exquisite hymns. The theme of his hymns was always the soul's progress from ignorance to realization of God.

While Tamil saints were awakening an ardent religious sentiment among the people, Sanskrit scholars of the south were making a strenuous appeal to the mind. Sanskrit was taught in the Vedic colleges attached to the Hindu temples at Kanchi, and Sanskrit authors found a warm welcome at the Pallava court. The poet Bharavi, who composed the *Kiratarjuniya*, and Dandin, author of the prose romance entitled *Adventures of the Ten Princes*, are said to have received the patronage of Pallava kings. Throughout the Deccan, Brahmin priests, teachers and scholars were writing voluminous and important works in Sanskrit. An eighth-century Chalukyan copperplate praises one Bhavasarman as master of "three thousand branches of knowledge." Sanskrit works were also translated into the Dravidian languages. The eleventh-century Telugu version of the *Mahabharata*, by Nannayya Bhatta, and the twelfth-century Tamil version of the *Ramayana*, by Kampan, were two important works produced under Chola patronage. They made the great Aryan heroes and heroines of the ancient epics the beloved possession of India.

It is southern India which also produced Shankaracharya. Shankara was a Brahmin of Malabar, probably born in 738. Tradition says that he adopted an ascetic life from the age of eight, and that he completed his studies and began writing philosophic works in the form of commentaries in Sanskrit at the age of twelve. His teacher, who lived in a cave at Nasik, followed the Vedantic school of religious thought, but the pupil had soon outstripped the master. Later on, Shankara traveled

extensively about India, preaching, teaching, and debating with opponents in philosophical assemblies. He was the founder of four great Hindu centers for the order of Sannyasins, or renouncers. These were at the four corners of India, Sringeri in Mysore, Puri in Orissa, Dwarka in Kathiawar, Kedarnath in the Himalayas. Tradition says he died at the latter place, still only thirty-two.

Shankara's religious ideas are deeply impressed on India, and every educated Hindu today, whatever sect he adheres to, owes something of his mental make-up to Shankara's doctrine of the Advaita, of ultimate Oneness. Shankara took his stand strictly on the *Upanishads*, and his commentaries on the ten major *Upanishads* and on the *Brahma-Sutras* by Badarayana—the earliest attempt to find a unified system of thought in those teachings—are the oldest commentaries in existence on any of those ancient works. He was an out-and-out monist in his interpretation. Tolerating no idea of duality, no thought of an external world, no God apart from the all-inclusive One, no "I" separate from That One, he taught that Brahman (God, or Atman) is the sole reality. All else is Maya, or illusive appearance. Brahman is without qualities, and cannot be defined by the limited mind. It is neither He nor She. It is Sat-Chit-Ananda, Pure Being, Pure Knowledge, Pure Bliss. The individual soul is one with Brahman, but out of ignorance is unaware of its true nature. When ignorance is removed, knowledge awakens, and the soul at last knows itself for what it is. It no longer makes the mistake of identifying itself with the body, the senses or worldly objects, and it becomes eternally free.

Shankara's interpretation of the *Upanishads* could not be ignored. It had either to be accepted or rejected. But the Bhakta did not want to argue. He simply wished to love God. The Saivas made a sort of compromise. Shiva, the object of their adoration, was meditated upon as a Great Yogi. He possessed nothing. He wore sacred ashes and matted locks. He frequented the burning ground. He was the God of Destruction, but essen-

tially the destruction of Ignorance. The Saivas found little antagonism between their views and the Advaita system of Shankaracharya. Saivism henceforward made great progress in south India, and most of the later Chola kings were zealous Saivas.

A new Saiva sect, the Lingayat, founded by Basava, sprang up in the western Deccan during the twelfth century. The Lingayats are still numerous in Mysore and in the Kanarese country south of Bombay. They are Shiva worshippers, but they oppose the whole Hindu caste system as a negation of the doctrine of fundamental unity.

The Vaishnavas were less able to come to terms with Shankara's Advaita. In the eleventh century they found a great defender of their devotional form of faith in Ramanuja. He agreed with Shankara that the sole goal of life was spiritual knowledge, but maintained that this depended on the grace of the Lord and that the surest way to win his grace was by loving him. Ramanuja also based his teachings on the *Upanishads*, but differed in his interpretation. He accepted God both with and without form, and held that God with form possessed positive attributes of love, kindness and mercy for his devotees. Everybody was entitled to share in the divine grace of the Lord, and he himself acknowledged as a teacher a saintly man who originally belonged to an untouchable caste. He accepted the idea that in order to save mankind, Narayana (one name for Vishnu) repeatedly took birth on earth under different forms, known as Avatars. Ramanuja also believed that God, the world, and individual souls are all real, and ignorance is the result of the contraction of the soul, as it were, through the effects of past bad actions. His system is called a philosophy of qualified monism, Visishtadvaita.

Ramanuja became the ecclesiastical head of the Vaishnavas and made Sri Rangam his headquarters, but the antagonism of one of the Chola kings, a Saiva, later compelled him to flee to Mysore, where he remained as a refugee for twelve years. Be-

sides being responsible for many important philosophical works, Ramanuja organized seventy-four Vaishnava dioceses, or districts, in different parts of India, and appointed for each a pious householder as spiritual leader.



In art, as in literature, religion and philosophy, the Dravidian genius found ample scope for expression. Inspired by the earlier Buddhist cave temples, the Chalukyas, Pallavas and Rashtrakutas, between the sixth and ninth centuries, began to excavate similar Hindu rock temples dedicated to Vishnu or Shiva. The first Chalukyan rock-cut shrines, picturesquely located in the scarp of a hill, are at Vatapi. They differ a little from Buddhist shrines in having an entirely open front and a recessed cell in the back wall for enshrining an image. They are also smaller in size and less elaborate. Pillars sometimes show a purely southern "cushion" type of capital.

The most important Pallava cave temples of the Tamil country, practically contemporary with the Chalukyan, are found near Madras at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram), the deserted port of ancient Kanchi. The Pallava rock pavilions, with their

appropriate sculptures, were dedicated not only to Vishnu and Shiva, but to the goddess Durga as well.

In the middle of the eighth century, the Hindu passion for cutting pillared halls out of solid rock reached its climax at Elura and Elephanta. What Ajanta means to Buddhism, Elura means to Hinduism. Elura lies only seventy miles from Ajanta, and the Buddhists were the first to discover the suitability of its great cliff of traprock for excavation. There are twelve Buddhist caves at Elura. But the middle of the seventh century saw the beginning of the construction of sixteen Brahmanical caves in the same cliff, within whose shadowy depths magnificent images of Hindu gods were called into being.

At Ajanta, there is placid calm. Peaceful Buddhas sit in eternal meditation, and lovely Bodhisattvas, benign and compassionate, bestow blessings upon gentle worshippers. All human tempests subside and become hushed in their presence. Everything echoes the idea of renunciation. The world is unreal, only Nirvana is real.

How different the atmosphere of Elura! The vast walls thrust forth gigantic images carved in high relief. They are actors in crowded scenes drawn mainly from the Puranas. These gods of Hinduism are many-armed, many-eyed. They slay, they dance, they fight demons, they make love, unabashed. They assume strange shapes, sometimes having the body of a man but the head of a boar, a horse or a lion. Never were these gods mortal. They are symbols of universal forces, of primal creation and ultimate destruction. They are abstractions, wearing the form of the particular. There is an immense vitality in the Elura sculptures, an originality that is quite indescribable. Here, nothing is still. The very shadows are restless, vibrating with hidden meanings. The beholder of whatever race or creed stands spellbound. Puny thoughts take wing. Nowhere else in the world, perhaps, has the vision of the superhuman been so marvelously expressed in art forms as at Elura.

It was one of the Elura temples which apparently supplied



## The TRIMŪRTI

the direct inspiration for a beautiful eighth-century shrine of Shiva on the island of Elephanta in Bombay harbor. Both have the same rather unusual plan of transverse halls, with three entrances approached by flights of steps guarded by lions. Both have the same massive "cushion" type of pillars. But the interior sculptures at Elephanta are the chief attraction. On the back wall of the main chamber are three large square recesses, framing these sculptures. The eastern panel presents Shiva in the

form known as Arddhanari, the combination of male and female in one figure. The western panel enshrines Shiva and Parvati. But the commanding central panel holds a colossal bust with a three-faced head, Shiva in three aspects of being, or possibly the Hindu *trimurti*, or threefold image, of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. The eyes in each face are meditatively closed. The exaggeratedly full lower lip is strangely soft and human. The whole effect is startling. Indian art has little to surpass this sculptured image in its mysterious beauty and dignity.

But the final expression of the rock-cut style of Indian temple architecture is the famous Kailasa temple of Elura, called by Percy Brown "the most stupendous single work of art executed in India." A Chalukyan temple at Pattadakal, the Virupaksha temple, built by a Chalukyan queen in 730 to celebrate her husband's conquest of Kanchi, furnished the plan for the Kailasa temple, but inscriptional evidence suggests that the Pattadakal temple was really the work of a Pallava architect. In any case, the Kailasa temple begun under the Rashtrakuta king Krishna I is double its size, and the chief marvel is that it was not architecturally constructed, like its Chalukyan predecessor, but was entirely sculptured from the solid stone.

The Elura artisans set to work with breathless daring to slice their temple out of the great Elura cliff. First they trenched out a stone island, 100 feet high in the center, 100 feet deep, 200 feet long. Starting from the summit of this island, they cut and carved and sculptured as they went, finishing everything to the last detail as they worked downward. It has been calculated that at least 200,000 tons of rock were removed before Kailasa — the name of Shiva's heaven in the Himalayas — finally emerged with its three-tiered Dravidian tower, its pillared halls, its many small shrines and stairways and flying bridges. A double-storied gatehouse stands in front of the temple, flanked by stone pillars fifty feet high. Two great sculptured elephants guard the courtyard, and a Nandi shrine is connected with the main temple by

a stone bridge. Around the courtyard is a cloister with colonnades and side chambers, and the high plinth of the temple bears a bold frieze of elephants and lions. Five small shrines occupy part of the space of the platform supporting the main temple. Although dedicated to Shiva, the Kailasa temple shows no exclusive sectarian spirit in its sculptures. Vishnu on Garuda, and Krishna lifting Mount Govardhana, appear on its walls. There are also graceful figures of the river goddesses of the Ganges, Jumna and Saraswati, and high up on the exterior are exquisite flying figures of celestial beings.

It must have taken a century to complete the Kailasa temple at Elura, but for more than eleven centuries it has continued to bear silent witness to the wonderful religious fervor, the incredible patience, the supreme skill and startling originality of those ancient workers who conceived the task and carried it out. The inscription on a copperplate grant reads: "Krishnaraja caused to be constructed a temple of a wonderful form on the mountain of Elapura. When the gods, moving in their aerial cars, saw it, they were struck with wonder and constantly thought much over the matter, saying to themselves, 'This temple of Shiva is self-existent, for such beauty is not to be found in a work of art.' Even the architect who constructed it was struck with wonder, saying, when his heart misgave him about making another similar attempt, 'Wonderful! I did not know how it was that I could construct it!'"

India's early builders in stone were really sculptors rather than masons, and sculpture was inseparable from the temples which rapidly multiplied all over India under Hindu kings. Hindu images, in their varied types, naturally offered a more satisfying outlet for the sculptor's skill than the creation of endless Buddhas who, by the limitation of the subject, had to be shown only in a few repeated poses, seated in a cross-legged posture or in a standing position of calm dignity. The gods of Hinduism, both terrible and benign, were above all active. Mythology furnished a rich tapestry of ideas, and Hindu images, from the

Gupta period onward, were produced in hundreds upon thousands all over India, in media of stone, bronze, copper or wood. The most ancient Hindu images in existence are a few pottery plaques of the second century B.C., with figures of Ganesa, Agni and Shiva, found in Jaipur State. But the early medieval period saw all the varied types of gods and goddesses well established, and subjects, episodes and scenes standardized. In other words, Hindu culture had produced its valid symbols, understood and accepted in all parts of India.

Shiva as the Great Ascetic, as Mahadeva drinking the poison of the world, Shiva in his nuptials with Uma, or Parvati, daughter of Himalaya, Shiva as Nataraja, performing his cosmic dance of destruction, Shiva saving the world from deluge by catching the river Ganga in his hair as she made her descent from heaven, Shiva's two sons, Skanda, god of war (called Subramanya in south India), astride his peacock and flourishing manifold weapons, and fat, jolly Ganesa with his elephant's head, Shiva's bull Nandi — all these were adored by the Saivas.

The Vaishnavas were presented with an even more varied choice of sacred images. Vishnu was the solar deity, taking three mighty strides across the sky — and morning, noon and evening were accomplished! Vishnu, standing rigid and immovable, became the upholder and sustainer of the universe. On his head was a high jeweled diadem, in his four hands, discus, mace, conch shell and lotus. As Narayana, the Supreme Being, he made his bed on the coiled body of the serpent Ananta or Sesh, floating on the surface of the Primeval Ocean in profound sleep, between the cycles of dissolution and re-creation. At the time of re-creation, a golden lotus sprang from his navel, and from this lotus Brahma, the god of creation, was born. Vishnu's two consorts were Sri or Lakshmi, goddess of prosperity, and Bhu Devi, the earth goddess, and his vehicle was Garuda, the wonderful sun-bird, half-eagle and half-man. Vishnu also had his many incarnations, for the purpose of saving the world and teaching devotion to himself. The principal incarnations were



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the Fish, the Tortoise, the Boar, the Lion-man, the Dwarf, Rama-of-the-Ax, Rama and Krishna. Buddha, too, was sometimes considered as an incarnation, and it was held that one is still to come.

Still another group of Hindu images especially appealed to Devi worshippers who sought God in the form of the Mother, Saktas, as they were known, from *śakti*, the principle of creative force conceived as female. For such, God the Mother took the chaste guise of Parvati, Lakshmi or Sarasvati, goddess of learning, or the multiple-armed Durga riding a lion and hurling her trident at a buffalo-demon, or terrible Kali with flowing hair and girdle of human hands, dancing her wild dance on the prostrate body of Shiva. In this aspect Kali symbolizes creative energy (*prakṛiti*) and Maya. Until she removes herself — that is, until Ignorance is dispelled by Knowledge — Truth remains inert under her dancing feet.

So all these ideas of Hinduism, each with a profound meaning, gave Hindu sculptors a wonderful chance for dramatic expression, and the popular themes were repeated and repeated until they sank deep into the thought-stream of the whole people.

Hindu temples, as distinct from cave temples, date only from Gupta times, and seem to have been a northern invention, but little time elapsed before temples were being built in every southern city. During the fifth and sixth centuries, the temple plan was still experimental, but after this its conventions were more or less fixed. More than seventy early Chalukyan temples have been found at Aiholi in the Deccan. Many have flat roofs like the earliest surviving Gupta temples. Some are chaitya-shaped, with a rounded end. Two styles of towers dominate the shrines, typically Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. The first is curvilinear, and the lines slope upward with a slight outward bulge before converging in a narrow neck, which is surmounted by a fluted stone ornament called an *amalaka*. Chalukyan towers of this type usually have a projecting flat band extending down

the center of each side. The Dravidian tower is best described as a stepped pyramid. It rises from a square or oblong base, in horizontal receding stories. The façade of each story is decorated with little pavilions, chaitya windows and niches with overhanging canopies, architectural features borrowed from the style of the Buddhist monastery.

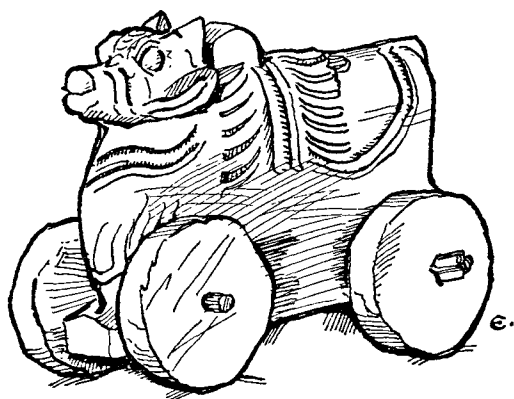
To begin with, the Hindu temple, which faced east, was a single small building with a pillared porch in front, but later on a projecting cell at the western end of the temple became the shrine for the image. Then the shrine itself became a separate building, and the original pillared porch, the *mandapa*, was transformed into a hall for worshippers. Still later, the temple and mandapa were again combined by a sort of connecting antechamber. Such was the final plan of the Hindu temple. A Shiva temple was easy to distinguish externally by its trident pinnacle or a Nandi bull in the courtyard. Stone lions projected like waterspouts from the tower of a Devi temple. A Vishnu temple might display Garudas at the corners.

While the Chalukyan rulers were building the Aiholi temples in the western Deccan, their Pallava contemporaries of the seventh century were executing some still more remarkable temples in the Tamil country. These earliest Pallava temples were monoliths, giant blocks or boulders of stone sculptured into shape. Six monolithic temples of this type are near the seashore at Mamallapuram, not far from Madras, and another structural temple stands close by. They are popularly referred to as the "Seven Pagodas" and are also called *Raths*, because they resemble the heavy temple cars used for taking out Hindu images in procession. In all probability, the monolithic temples were either intended as Saiva shrines, or models of such, but they have remained something of an enigma. Some of them were never completed, and it is doubtful if any of them was ever actually used as a place of worship. With the death of the Pallava king Narasimha, under whom they were begun, the work stopped.

The next Pallava temple was the so-called Shore Temple near

by, erected by Rajasimha, and this was built of separate stone blocks. It now literally overhangs the sea which has been chafing and fretting at its base for twelve hundred years. Inside is a recumbent statue of Vishnu, and rising from the breakers in front of the shrine is a stone lamppost, possibly a lighthouse to guide ships entering or leaving the harbor of Mamallapuram in the days of Pallava glory.

### Toy Nandi



### from South India

Quite apart from the development of their own distinctive type of architecture, exemplified in the early temples at Mamallapuram and later ones at Kanchi, the Pallavas were distinguished sculptors. All their temples are decorated with elaborate reliefs, and in the vicinity of the Rathes they have left a number of colossal granite figures of animals finely sculptured in the round — a bull, a lion, two elephants — presumably symbolizing Shiva, Durga and Indra. There is also a realistic group of monkeys, a female monkey nursing her young while the male intently searches her head for lice. The temple sculptures of the Pallavas also include standing portraits of kings and queens, whose names are identified by inscriptions. Amaravati,

the ancient Andhra capital in the south in pre-Pallava days, was a flourishing center of Buddhist art at the time when it was incorporated into the expanding Pallava domain, and the influence of Buddhist Amaravati can be traced in Hindu Pallava sculpture.

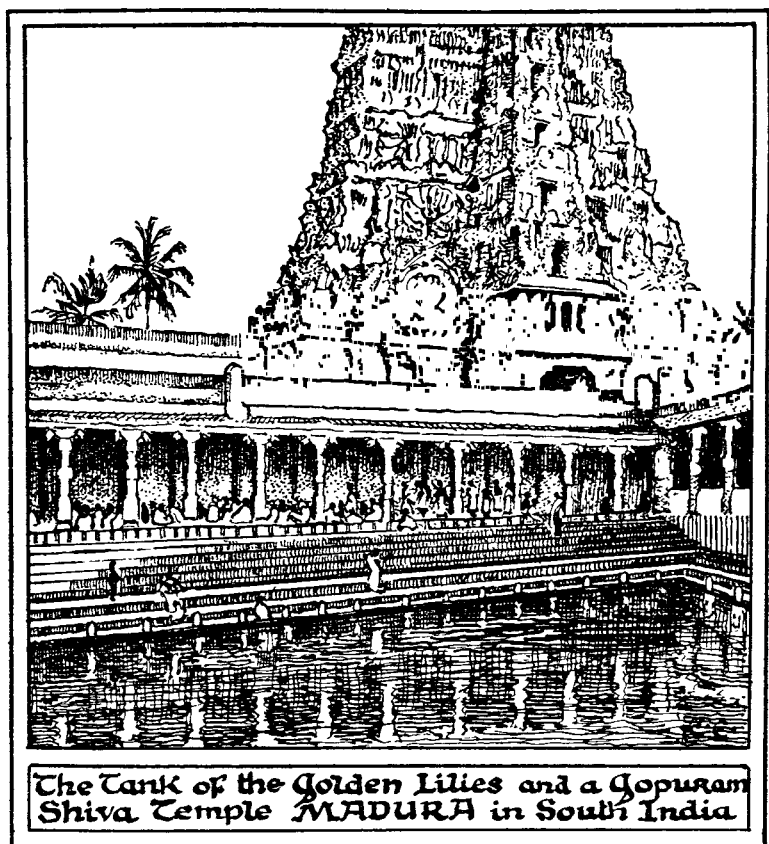
The most striking of all Pallava sculptures is a unique high relief carving on the side of a great whale-backed ridge at Mammallapuram. It represents the descent of the Ganges from heaven, but it is often wrongly called "Arjuna's Penance." The sculptured picture is ninety feet long and twenty feet high. A natural cleft in the rock has been cleverly utilized to suggest the descent of the river goddess, indicated in the forms of a Naga king and queen. All creation greets the descent of Ganga with joyous adoration. In the upper air, gods and goddesses and bearded rishis dance ecstatically. In the forests, ascetics bow or stand with folded palms. One remains poised on one foot, arms lifted above his head, in the time-honored pose of the Brahmin ascetic — this is the supposed Arjuna of popular imagination. Emerging from behind rocks or looking out from the entrances to caves are delightful wild creatures, monkeys, lions, elephants, peacocks, rabbits, tortoises, fearless because they know they will suffer no harm from the holy men who have made their abode in the depths of the forest. A deer lying down and scratching his nose with a hind foot is charmingly realistic. There is also an ascetic cat standing on its hind legs, while rats and mice play about its feet. At the base of the cliff in procession are two majestic life-size elephants, accompanied by three young ones.

After the ninth century, when the technique of building with separate stones came into general use in India, distinctive local styles in architecture arose. In Mysore, under the Hoysalas, the so-called star-shaped temple reached its maturity. Instead of being square or oblong, these temples, which were built on high platforms, were angulated like the points of a star, or fluted in appearance. The Hoysala artists of Mysore covered their temples with minute lacelike carvings, as intricate and delicate as the

work of a sandalwood carver or a goldsmith. Narrow bands, borders and friezes, one above another, decorated the entire outside of the high plinths. Someone has taken the trouble to count the number of elephants in the lowest frieze of the twelfth-century Hoysalesvara temple at Halebid. There are more than two thousand of them! The Jains, in their more or less contemporary temple art, were deeply influenced by the Chalukyan-Hoysala style of decorative carving. In particular, the beautiful marble temples at Mount Abu in Rajputana represent the last word in this type of sculptured detail.

It is to the Cholas and their successors in the Tamil south that credit goes for building temples on the grandest scale to be found anywhere in India. At Tanjor, the Chola king Rajaraja the Great erected a magnificent Saiva temple in about the year 1000. Its walled courtyard measures 250 by 500 feet. In this temple the small tower of early Pallava times soars upward to a height of 190 feet. The single block of stone which forms the rounded dome is estimated to weigh something like eighty tons. The feat of hoisting this into position commands unbounded admiration for the engineering skill of Chola builders, who also designed remarkable irrigation projects. Rajendra not only constructed a large artificial lake sixteen miles long, but threw granite dams across several great rivers in the Chola territory. As sculptors, also, the Cholas excelled. The exterior walls of the great Tanjor temple have figures and scenes of exquisite finish.

In the twelfth century the Cholas, after two hundred and fifty years of rule, were forced to yield to the might of the Pandyas, who reasserted themselves after a long period of quiescence. Since the style of Dravidian temples had become incapable of further development, the Pandyas contented themselves with repeating and emphasizing all the established features. They built several series of great courtyards around the older temples until they succeeded in creating huge temple cities. Each quadrangular courtyard was marked off by a high wall, and in the center of each wall rose a massive gate tower or *gopuram*, which



dwarfed the *vimana* of the central shrine. The height of the gate towers increased with each new addition, so that the outermost entrance towers eventually became the biggest of all. To support the great weight, the base had to be of stone, but the superstructures were plastered brick, a medium which lent itself to excessively ornate and exuberant decoration, much inferior in quality to the noble stonework of earlier centuries. Later still, the same tendencies reached a climax in "thousand pillared" halls. In the famous Minakshi temple of Madura, the pillars are in the form of an army of riders mounted on rearing horses which seem to advance like a cavalcade through the shadows. Tunnel-like corridors of immense length, dwindling to a pin

point of light in the far distance, also became popular, in place of colonnaded cloisters. The corridors of the temple at Rameswaram, which is supposed to mark the place where Rama performed his first act of worship after his rescue of Sita and his return to India, extend to nearly four thousand feet.

Kings and humble people combined their wealth and skill to construct and adorn the great Hindu temples of southern India. Wars for political domination were between Indians who at least held the same common Hindu faith. Whoever was the victor usually signalized his victory by trying to outdo his defeated predecessor in temple-building. And such temples are still places of worship and pilgrimage for millions.

## CHAPTER X

### *The Guptas and Harsha*

(A.D. 300–650)

FOR THE SAKE of clarity and continuity, the broad outline of south-Indian history and Aryan-Dravidian culture has been carried through, consecutively, to a point much later than that at which the account of the rest of India was dropped. It is now necessary to go back and see what was happening all this time in northern India.

The blood of the Central Asian barbarians who had settled in northwest India at the commencement of the Christian Era had thinned out within two centuries, through the process of intermarriage with the more civilized conquered Indians. At almost the same moment of history when Andhra rule came to an end in the Deccan, in the early part of the third century A.D., the Kushan Empire in the north also began to crumble. A brief century of uncertainty ensued, in which small rival powers struggled among themselves for the inheritance of the northern empire, and then once more nearly the whole of north India was brought under the direct and unified rule of a single mighty force, the imperial dynasty of the Guptas.

In its long history, India has many times been thrown into a chaos of rival states, bits of a jigsaw puzzle almost impossible to fit together in any orderly pattern, but it has also known long periods of brilliant and unified empire. These Indian empires, with the remarkable exception of Asoka's, like most other empires, rested on military conquest — yet with this difference. An Indian king, when he claimed to have conquered the Four

Quarters, meant the Four Quarters of India. The geographical unity of India itself furnished a legitimate incentive to try to build political unity. Such Indian empires, when they came into existence, never riveted together entirely unrelated and alien territories and peoples, like the Greek and Roman Empires of the past, or the British Empire of the nineteenth century. When the Mauryan Empire arose, Vedic fires had been sending up their smoke from all parts of India, even the Dravidian south. The Aryans had absorbed many Dravidian ideas and raised them into abstract principles which could function in their own system of thought. The Dravidians had accepted much of Aryan philosophy. Gods and goddesses were interchanged. A scheme of social organization based on color and caste distinctions, while it broke down society into small units, at the same time fitted each unit into the conception of a whole. Jainism and Buddhism, as they spread from their original homes, bequeathed common ideals and a common culture to countless multitudes, and Buddhism in particular materially softened the hard edges of the caste system. Brahminism and Hinduism also flung out an all-embracing net from north to south, and east to west. The different parts of India were thus always made to enrich one another, and offered their own individual contributions to the common store of religious ideas, customs, legends, literature and art, which has become the indivisible inheritance of every true son and daughter of India today. Hence an ambitious conqueror who temporarily succeeded in extending his political sway in this direction or that, might force other kings to bow their heads in submission to his will, but scarcely disturbed the deeper currents of Indian life. When his empire inevitably tottered and crashed in ruins, after a short time it was found that life flowed on much as before.

One of the greatest unifying periods of Indian history came in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., when the enlightened Gupta kings once more brought all of northern India, and a good part of the Deccan as well, under their centralized authority. The

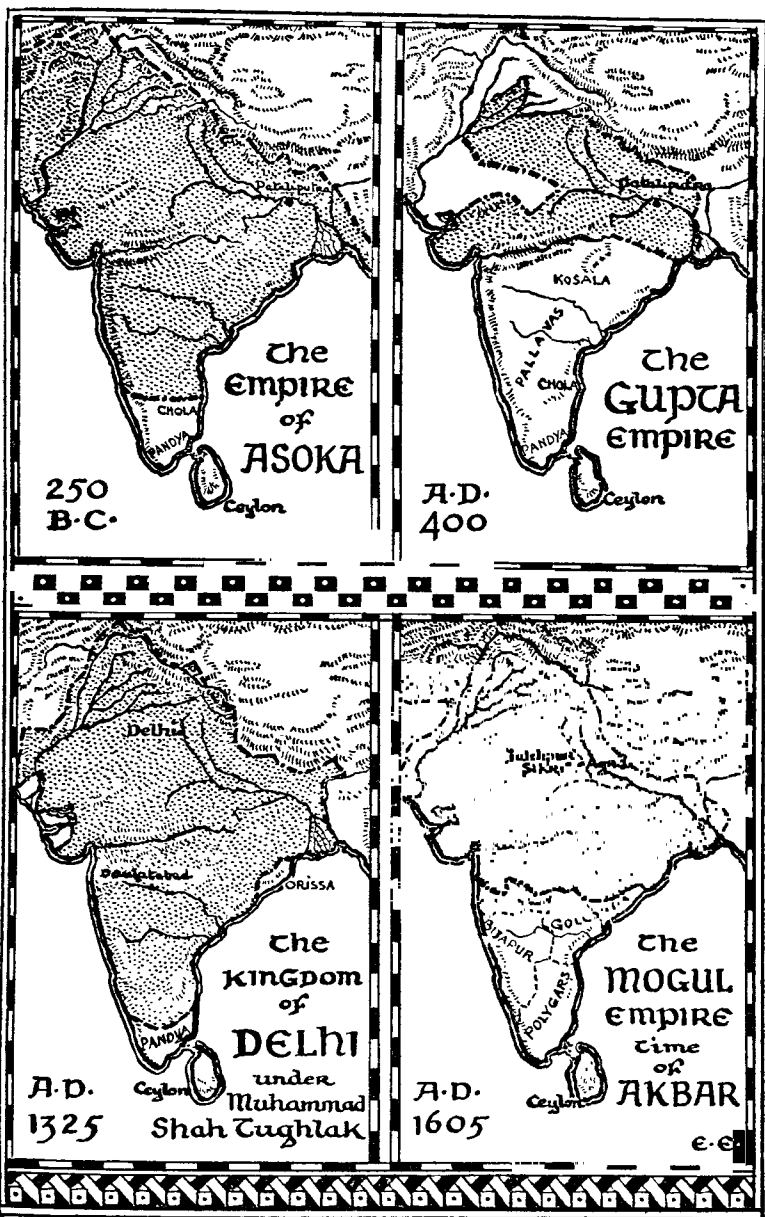
hundred and sixty years of their rule is often referred to as India's Golden Age. Foreign influences exerted by Bactrian Greeks, Sakas or Kushans were no longer significant. There was no immediate threat of danger to India from any external quarter. The Persian legions under kings of the Sassanid Dynasty were too busy defending Persia — and incidentally India — from the Romans, to do more than occasionally nibble at India's western borders. China, midway between the periods of its history known as Han and Tang, for the moment was torn by internal strife and at the mercy of nomad hordes sweeping down from the north. Locust swarms of Huns were ominously gathering over the horizon in central Asia, it is true, but they were still afar off. Europe was lost in the blackout of the Dark Ages. And not for another two centuries or so was Mecca to see the birth of a little Arab boy destined to grow up and shake the continent of Asia as with a tumultuous earthquake. It was during this interval of calm that India had the good fortune to be ruled by a line of extraordinarily intelligent and able kings. In the whole contemporary world of Asia and Europe, it ranked first in civilization and culture.

The founder of the Gupta Dynasty was Chandragupta I, who bore no relationship to Chandragupta Maurya, who lived six hundred years before. The family connections of Chandragupta I are not clear. Possibly he was a descendant of the family locally ruling at Pataliputra, now shorn of glory. When he married Kumara Devi, a princess of the neighboring Lichavi clan of Vaisali, prominent in the time of the Buddha, he evidently bettered his fortunes. The Lichavis must still have maintained a measure of importance, for Chandragupta I, obviously proud of his new association, promptly issued a gold coin in his queen's and the Lichavi name, in addition to his own. His ambition urged him to carve out a little kingdom for himself between Pataliputra (Patna) and Prayag (Allahabad) at the junction of the Ganges and the Jumna. This venture succeeded, and calling himself "King of Kings," he had himself crowned at Patali-

putra. The year was A.D. 320, which became the first year of the new Gupta Era adopted by him and his successors. Chandragupta, founder of the line, died only a few years later, however, and did not long enjoy the privileges of monarchy.

Samudra, his son, was a born military genius, and without him there certainly would have been no real Gupta Empire. He at once set forth on a career of conquest in all directions, and in a surprisingly short space of time had acquired an empire almost as extensive as that of Asoka. His long reign of nearly fifty years gave him plenty of time not only to consolidate territories won by force of arms but to bestow on them the blessings of an enlightened rule. He proclaimed himself a follower of Vishnu, and was therefore a Hindu, but he was liberal and just in his treatment of all religious faiths. He was also a generous patron of the arts and of learning. Yet strange to say the very name of Samudragupta was forgotten in India until foreign scholars disentangled it only a little more than a century ago from old coins, a few references in the Buddhist literature of Ceylon and China, and a single long inscription in Sanskrit verse and prose engraved on one of Asoka's old stone pillars. This pillar, originally at Kosambi, was dragged forty miles and set up again in the Allahabad Fort by the Mughal Emperor Akbar in the sixteenth century. The inscription was composed at the order of Samudra's son and successor, Chandragupta II, by Samudra's court poet, and the account of his wars is in curious contrast with the ancient, half-obliterated message of Asoka carved on the same pillar, "The chiefest conquest is the law of piety."

As soon as Samudra ascended the Gupta throne, he marched west and north, "forcibly rooting up" nine rival kings of the Ganges Valley, and thus extending the boundaries of his realm as far as the Chambal River, a branch of the Jumna. Then he marched east, subduing and reducing to a position of servitude the chiefs of the forest tribes of Kalinga. Without stopping to take breath, he continued his triumphal progress to the south, where he humbled the pride of eleven more kings. Advancing



Map of the four empires

well into the Tamil country, he brought his army right up to the walls of the Pallava capital of Kanchi, the modern Conjeevaram, near Madras. He then swung westward, crossed the peninsula into Malabar, and finally returned to his capital at Ayodhya by way of the western Deccan plateau. In the three years of his southern campaign, he and his huge army marched altogether three thousand miles, fighting their way the whole time through difficult country against hostile forces. Yet nowhere does Samudra seem to have suffered a single defeat.

In spite of his astonishing military successes, Samudragupta made no attempt to incorporate the conquered southern kingdoms into his own empire. He was content to take home vast hoards of gold and jewels, permitting the humbled southern kings to remain on their thrones as vassals and tributaries. When he got home, he celebrated the ancient Vedic rite of the Horse Sacrifice with ostentatious pomp, as proof that he had become a world conqueror. One of his gold coins shows the tethered horse standing before the sacrificial altar. By this time, his fame was great enough to make the frontier kings and chieftains of Bengal, Assam, Malwa, Gujarat and the Punjab, as well as those ruling the territory of the Himalayan arc, see the wisdom of seeking subordinate alliances with him, and they sent voluntary tribute in token of their submission. Even the Saka and Kushan princes still exercising some form of attenuated authority in distant Kabul and in the region of the Oxus, as also Meghavarman, king of Ceylon, were discreet enough to dispatch embassies and presents to the Gupta court.

This Samudra, "skilled in a hundred battles," and the possessor of an astonishing military genius and first-rank organizing ability, was also lauded as a gifted musician and poet by the panegyrist of the inscription. One coin bearing his name shows him seated on a high-backed couch, or throne, playing the *vina*, the seven-stringed instrument commonly called the Indian lute. Samudra is also said to have taken special delight in philosoph-

ical discussions, and the learned Buddhist scholar Vasubhandu is supposed to have spent some years as councilor at his court.

Chandragupta II, third and greatest of the Gupta emperors, succeeded to the throne in 380. He is frequently known simply by the title he assumed, also borne by several other Indian kings, of Vikramaditya, "Sun of Valor." Under him, India attained new resplendence.

Chandragupta II made it his first business to undertake a few military campaigns, just to round off the large empire he had inherited. Lustrous bits of western territory still remained outside the Gupta orbit. Whoever controlled the western seaports and the ancient and distinguished city of Ujjain, capital of Malwa and chief inland distributing center for the Indian trade with Arabia and Egypt, obviously controlled a valuable source of revenue. Chandragupta II wasted no time in attacking the Saka satrap who was still holding on to this western territory. After a brief campaign, conducted in the closing years of the fourth century, he defeated the opposing armies and put the satrap himself, twenty-first of his line, to death. The whole of western India, including Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar, was then annexed to the Gupta Empire. This notable victory was probably the incentive for Chandragupta to call himself "Vikramaditya."

In the environs of Delhi, in the courtyard of a ruined mosque adjacent to the famous twelfth-century tower of victory, the Kutb Minar, stands a curious Iron Pillar, which has long been associated with the name of Chandragupta II. The pillar, originally a shaft erected in honor of Vishnu, was removed from some unknown site and set up outside Delhi in the eleventh century. It bears a long Sanskrit legend in early Gupta characters, detailing the military feats of one King Chandra, who conquered Bengal and crossed the seven tributaries of the river Indus. Although it is not certain that the Chandra of the Iron Pillar is really Chandragupta II, no rival candidate has yet been

approved, and since the time and style of writing generally fit Chandragupta's period, it is assumed that the inscription refers to him.

The chief interest of the pillar, apart from the historical significance of the inscription, is that it is a marvel of the forger's art of early Gupta times. The column is a foot and a half thick at the base and twenty-three feet high, and it has been estimated to weigh not less than six tons. It is forged in a single piece of pure rustless iron, and sixteen hundred years of exposure to every kind of weather has not affected the metal in any way. A similar fourth-century pillar, even larger, though unfortunately broken, is at Dhar, an ancient city in Rajputana. Europe, until the eighteenth century, could not equal India's metallurgical skill in the fourth century A.D., as evidenced by the existence of these pillars. Not for another fifteen hundred years was any western foundry able to turn out a similar large mass of metal, or metal of comparable quality!

During the reign of Chandragupta II, a sturdy Buddhist monk from faraway China, the first of many such distinguished visitors, arrived in India in search of correct texts on Buddhist monastic discipline. The traveler was Fa Hian, who set out from Chang-an, the present-day Sian-fu, in the year 399, walked across the whole of central Asia and reached India six years later. Of the five friends who started out on the journey with him, two turned back, two died on the way and one decided to remain permanently in India. Fa Hian himself stayed in India six years, visiting monasteries and making pilgrimages to places sacred to the Buddhist world. He learned Sanskrit in order to be able to copy the precious *Sutras* he wished to take back for the instruction of his brother monks in China, and he also made many drawings of holy images. Finally he returned home by way of the sea route from Ceylon. A friend, deeply impressed by Fa Hian's fortitude in braving countless dangers for the sake of his faith, begged him to write an account of his travels. The English translation of his little book, originally written on bam-

boo tablets and silk, consists of exactly ninety-two pages. It gives a wonderfully vivid picture of how an intelligent Chinese reacted to India as he saw it in the first years of the fifth century, under Gupta rule. Fa Hian's record, slight as it is, is far more illuminating than conventional historical inscriptions boasting of the military conquests of the Gupta kings.

The author does not trouble to mention the name of the great Chandragupta II, then reigning in India, nor, as a matter of fact, does he give the name of any living Indian king. Nevertheless he notes several facts about the government and the administration. He found the people generally prosperous and happy, and he was astonished over the absence of all those official restrictions and registrations so characteristic of his own land. "Those who want to go away, may go: those who want to stop, may stop," observes Fa Hian with pleased approval. Taxes were light. Only those who tilled the royal land had to give a proportion of their profit. Members of the king's bodyguard received fixed salaries, instead of being allowed to help themselves by making exactions from others. Justice was administered with fairness and leniency. Corporal punishment was not ordinarily practised, and there was no such thing as a death penalty. Criminals were fined according to the gravity of their offenses. For repeated attempts at treason, the offender was punished by the amputation of his right hand.

Fa Hian took it for granted that all Indians practised the same abstemious and controlled habits in regard to food that he found among the Buddhist communities he visited. "Throughout the country," he asserts sweepingly, "no one kills any living thing, nor drinks wine, nor eats onions or garlic. . . . They do not keep pigs or fowls, there are no dealings in cattle, no butcher's shops or distilleries in their market-places. . . . Only the *chandalas* go hunting and deal in flesh." The picture exaggerates, but obviously the religious and ethical doctrine of non-violence, deeply rooted in Indian thought and life, affected the food habits of the people. Even today, millions of Indians stick

to a vegetarian diet as a matter of principle. Fa Hian's observations about the chandalas show one of the reasons why they had to suffer social segregation. They inspired contempt in those who viewed their customs as impure. As a result, these people were compelled to live apart from others, and whenever they came into the towns or markets they had to give warning of their approach by striking a piece of wood, so that contaminating contact with them might be avoided. Fa Hian's incontrovertible testimony proves that "untouchability" was sadly established by the beginning of the fifth century.

It appears that Buddhism was in a highly flourishing state, particularly in the northwest. In Gandhara and the Punjab, Fa Hian visited great monasteries housing many thousands of monks, of both the Hinayana and Mahayana forms of faith. When he reached Mathura, he counted twenty monasteries in that place, and he was delighted to learn that once a year a great assembly was held for the special purpose of expounding the Buddhist doctrines. On such occasions, even kings and Brahmins treated the monks with politeness and respectfully made offerings to them. One type of meritorious offering took the form of gifts of lands and villages with binding title deeds for the support of monastic institutions. As Fa Hian journeyed onward, visiting one monastery after another, he was deeply impressed by the dignified ceremonial and courtesy observed in these establishments. The elders invariably came out to welcome him. His begging-bowl and bundle were taken from him, and he was given water to wash his feet and oil to rub his body. If it was past time for the single noon meal allowed by Buddhist discipline, the visitor was at least provided with such liquid refreshment as the rules permitted. Then he was invited to take rest, and later he was assigned a room and other necessities suitable to his status.

In Magadha, the Buddha's own land, the wayfarer from China found that the people were not only rich and thriving but that they pleasantly emulated one another "in practising charity of

heart and duty to one's neighbor." In all the important towns and cities, free hospitals were maintained by the well-to-do gentry. "Hither," Fa Hian says, "come all poor or helpless patients, orphans, widowers and cripples. They are well taken care of, a doctor attends them, food and medicine being supplied according to their needs. They are made quite comfortable, and when they are cured, they go away." Free hospitals were unknown in Europe until about five hundred years later. Still more astonishing to Fa Hian were the hospitals for animals. These, too, had existed in India from Asoka's time, and they were still being maintained by the Buddhist and Jain communities. There were also wayside resthouses in which free lodging and food were available to travelers. Fa Hian with scrupulous fairness enters a note that such charitable works were supported not only by the Buddhists but by many "heretical" sects as well. When he reached the old royal capital, Pataliputra, the ancient palace of Asoka left him wonder-struck. It was built of huge blocks of stone carved and inlaid with cunning designs. He naïvely imagined no human hands could have built it and that only superhuman beings could have been responsible for such an architectural masterpiece.

It is clear that though Chandragupta II himself, like nearly all the Guptas, professed to be a Hindu, Buddhists were in excellent standing, and suffered no sort of persecution under him. Nevertheless, the worship of Hindu gods was growing. Fa Hian saw many deva temples wherever he went. The change in religious outlook beginning to manifest itself was in part a national reaction against a religion adopted and popularized by foreign rulers like Kanishka. One reason why Buddhism made such rapid progress outside India was that it set up no barriers of exclusiveness. The haughty Brahmin priest could exercise no authority over the Buddhist laity. The new indiscriminate democracy tolerated by Buddhism, which allowed foreigners and "untouchables" free access to the sacred texts, must have been deeply resented by all the orthodox elements in the country,

particularly those who had a vested interest in priesthood. Buddhist practices of the fifth century were substituting for the earlier austere self-discipline and search for true spiritual knowledge leading to the emancipation of Nirvana, an emphasis on morality, social helpfulness and faith. This rather easygoing religion for laymen aroused the sleeping antagonism of powerful groups, who made it an excuse to encourage a switchback to Hinduism.

As Fa Hian passed eastward from Mathura, the changing conditions became more apparent. He was informed that ninety-six schools of "heretics" flourished in the very heart of the old Buddhist homeland. Many sacred places were already showing signs of neglect and decay. Kapilavastu was nothing but wilderness. Gaya was deserted, though near the site of the Bodhi tree were two monasteries housing six to seven hundred monks, one belonging to the Greater Vehicle, the other to the Lesser. The latter was the monastery built by King Meghavarman of Ceylon in the fourth century, under the special authorization of Samudragupta, for the purpose of providing shelter for Sinhalese Buddhist monks making a pilgrimage to the Bodhi tree. At Sravasthi, Fa Hian was depressed to find only a bare two hundred families scattered about the once prosperous capital of Kosala where the Blessed One had spent twenty-five rain-retreats and preached most of his sermons. At Kusinagara, where he had died, stupas and monasteries were still to be seen, but here, also, the inhabitants were few.

It was at Pataliputra that Fa Hian, after repeated disappointments, at last succeeded in obtaining the Sanskrit copies of the texts for which he had come all the long way to India. The Vinaya, or Discipline for the Order, as prescribed by the Buddha himself, was still being handed down orally from patriarch to patriarch, and written copies were very scarce. Paper, invented in A.D. 105 by a Chinese named Tsai Lun, had not yet found its way to India in the fifth century, and Indian substitutes were peculiarly fragile. In south India, books were made from the

leaves of a certain kind of palm, cut in strips about two inches wide and eighteen inches to three feet in length. The writing was done on these leaves, carefully oiled and polished, by pressing with a hard stylus. When rubbed with dried cow dung or other staining material and afterward brushed off, the indentations of the writing were left as dark brown marks. The leaves were then bored at one end and tied together between wooden covers, and the book was read by simply spreading the leaves out fan-wise. In northern India, sheets of birch bark took the place of palm leaves. All Indian manuscripts were obviously fragile and costly, and students usually had to content themselves with committing to memory the texts recited by their teachers. This explains Fa Hian's difficulty in gaining access to the manuscripts he wanted.

The Chinese visitor finally set sail from Tamralipti (Tamluk), at the mouth of the Ganges in Bengal, on a large merchant vessel carrying a complement of two hundred passengers and crew. He reached Ceylon within a fortnight, and tells with moving simplicity how, at sight of a white silk Chinese fan offered by a merchant before a jade image of Buddha in this distant land, he was suddenly overcome with homesickness. Nevertheless he remained in Ceylon for two more years, intent on collecting more texts. Then he embarked again on a sailing vessel, only to be delayed once more by a terrible typhoon encountered in the China Sea. All bulky goods had to be thrown overboard, and Fa Hian was terribly afraid that his fellow passengers would insist on his throwing over his precious books and images. He fixed his whole mind on the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, and made a fervent prayer that the purpose of his long journey might be fulfilled. His prayer was granted. The storm abated, his goods were saved, but his homeward voyage was lengthened by an enforced stopover in Java. However, he finally reached China safely in A.D. 414. He knew he was really home at last, he says, because suddenly he recognized all "the old familiar vegetables" of China.

Thanks to Fa Hian's contemporary account, Gupta India emerges as a country in which laws were just, the people were not exploited, manners were refined and cultured. But within only a few years of Fa Hian's visit, India was suddenly overwhelmed by a calamity more disastrous than any yet experienced.

It is a strange coincidence that at almost the same moment of history when the Huns were overrunning Europe, another branch of the same mongrel race was making a devastating raid deep into India. As far back as the last quarter of the fourth century, there had begun to boil up out of the mysterious steppes of Asia a people known as the Huns, of mixed Mongolian, Tartar, Turkish and Scythian blood. Some of these Hunnish tribes soon bore down on China. Others in the west attacked the Slavs, crossed the Volga, and slowly made their way along the northern coast of the Black Sea into Europe, where they spread out on both sides of the Danube in the country which still bears their name, Hungary. Here, in course of time, under their wild leader Attila, they laid waste town and countryside, burning, slaying and pillaging. They demanded tribute from the trembling Emperor of the East cowering in his palace at Constantinople. They struck terror into the heart of the Gothic tribes of northern Europe. One day in the year 451 they crossed the Rhine into Gaul. The fate of all Europe hung in the balance. But the advancing swarm of stocky little men on a multitude of shaggy horses met a desperate army of West Goths, Romans, Burgundians and Franks, hastily assembled on the Plain of Chalons in the valley of the Marne. The Huns were beaten back, and Europe was saved.

Just as this was happening in Europe, the Ye-tai-li-to, another tribe, or branch, of the same barbarous people, known to European classical writers as White Huns, or Ephthalites, and to Indians and Persians as Huna, began drifting about Asia on the lookout for new grasslands to conquer. When they reached the Oxus they swam their horses across and galloped away toward Persia. After a bitter struggle, lasting nearly a century, the Persians succeeded in pushing the unwelcome marauders

back, but not before they had killed one of the Persian kings, Firuz, whose daughter they captured and bore away as a bride for their leader, or khan. Checked in the direction of Persia, the nomad invaders next swarmed into Afghanistan, where they made Bamian their headquarters, and before long they were pouring down through the passes into India. China at least had a Great Wall fifteen hundred miles long to aid in protecting her frontiers against the barbarians. India, alas, had no Great Wall, and before the impetuous onrush the lightly guarded mountain passes proved but a feeble obstacle. The Huns overran the Punjab, streamed southward into Rajputana, Kathiawar and Malwa, and actually made forays as far eastward as Bihar.

The great Chandragupta died in about 415. He left behind him a rich and prosperous empire, at peace with itself and its neighbors, and his son Kumaragupta I carried on the Gupta tradition, fostering the arts. At the end of a long reign of forty years, however, he found himself involved in a minor war with a frontier tribe called Pushyamitra, about whom almost nothing is known, except that they inflicted a sharp defeat on the imperial army. The day was saved only by the personal energy and skill of the crown prince, Skandagupta.

Skandagupta became emperor in 455; it was he who had to meet the first invasion of India by the Huna, who now suddenly thrust their flying columns southward. For the time being, the hordes were held by the Gupta army, and an interesting memorial pillar was set up by Skandagupta at the town of Bhitari, giving a description of how he came galloping into the courtyard of the palace at Ayodhya to announce to his mother the defeat of the barbarians "just as Krishna, having slain his enemies, betook himself to his mother Devaki." Skandagupta's success was only a temporary one, and the Huns renewed their pressure. Led by their chieftain, Toramana, who by this time had established himself in the Punjab at Sakala, former capital of the Greek king Menander, they began to move onward like an avalanche. All efforts to check their irresistible advance proved

futile, and in the crucial moment of conflict, in 480, Skandagupta died.

The mighty Gupta Empire, already weakened by the strain of trying to check the Hun attacks, did not survive this latest blow. No central stable military force directed by a master mind existed, and the Huns swept down unimpeded into the plains of India.

There followed for India a century of unparalleled disaster. Previous invaders, whatever destruction they wrought, had always contributed something to Indian civilization. The Persians had organized a new system of sound administration. The Greeks had bequeathed an artistic tradition which the Kushans absorbed and passed on to subject India. Out of the synthesis of Greco-Roman art and Buddhism, enduring cultural values took shape. But the foe with whom India had now to deal had nothing to give and was bent on ruthless destruction. The son of Toramana, incongruously named Mihirakula, or "Sun-flower," who was born in India and considered himself a follower of Shiva, far outstripped his father in cruelty and mad destructiveness.

At last, in 528, a great revolt was staged against him. Two names are associated with India's ultimate victory over the Huns. Part of the credit goes to an unknown king named Baladitya, possibly one of the later Gupta rulers of Magadha. The real hero, however, seems to have been Yasodharman, head of the Malwa clans. Mihirakula himself was made a prisoner, but was generously allowed to retire to Kashmir, where he was offered a refuge by the Kashmir king. This courtesy Mihirakula repaid at the earliest opportunity by killing the king and taking possession of Kashmir. He was by now in a position to collect his scattered hordes, and consumed by a passionate hatred for Buddhists in particular he set out to destroy Buddhism, root, branch and flower. In Gandhara he exterminated the ruling family and put thousands of innocent people to death on the banks of the Indus. He next turned his attention to the beautiful

Buddhist monuments which had been erected with such amazing religious zeal by the Kushans, and deliberately burnt and broke to pieces monasteries, stupas and images, by hundreds and thousands. Only his death interrupted the work of senseless destruction. But he had accomplished enough. Later historians know him as the Attila of India.

All accounts of the Huns by early European and Asiatic writers speak with one voice of the terror and dismay they invariably left in their wake. Ugly in appearance, with short legs, flat noses, lean yellow faces and restless black eyes, they must have been fearsome to look upon. In character they are described as cruel and deceitful; in disposition, arrogant and revengeful. Living on raw meat, dried mare's milk and strong liquor, they were capable of remaining in the saddle for days and nights together. They were supremely skillful in the use of the bow and the lance, but were masters above all of surprise attack and mobile warfare. No wonder the black magic of their name everywhere caused men to turn pale. Somewhere, many miles to the rear of the flying horsemen, at a place where grass and water were plentiful, the great encampment known as the Horde, consisting of a vast conglomeration of black tents, carts, horses, women and children, stretched mile upon mile across the steppes. Barbaric splendor was not absent from the mobile court of their leader, the khan. A Chinese pilgrim, Sun Yung, following in the path of Fa Hian in the early part of the sixth century, has left a description of an interview he had with Mihirakula. The khan was dressed in embroidered silk, he writes, and sat on a golden throne supported by phoenix feet. His principal wife wore a silk garment which trailed three feet on the ground, and her headdress was made of a giant horn adorned with five kinds of precious stones.

In Europe, some Huns when they came into contact with higher civilization gave up their uncouth ways, learned Greek and Latin and eventually settled down as respectable citizens. They even became officers in the Roman army or fitted them-

selves for other posts of distinction. So also in India. As the tide which had carried them southward ebbed once more, many of the invaders remained behind. They took Indian wives, adopted the Hindu or Buddhist religion, and accepted India as their permanent home. One tribe in particular, the Gujaras, who had entered India with, or soon after, the White Huns, settled itself in Gujarat and later played a part of considerable importance in the history of that corner of India. Hunnish blood is thought to flow in the veins of the present-day Jats of the Punjab and the United Provinces, as well as some of the Hill Rajput clans and the Afghan tribes. If this is so, it may partly account for the restless turbulence which to this day pervades the northwest borderland region of India.

For a short time, the White Hun Empire sprawled across a vast stretch of central Asia. At the height of its power, in the beginning of the sixth century, it comprised forty rich provinces, the conquered Indian territories forming one of them. But this empire was built on no solid foundation. It was like one of those rushing torrents which suddenly tear down a desert gully, sweeping everything before them, and then disappear in a flash. The Huns could conquer, but could not hold.

Soon after the middle of the sixth century, a new power arose in Asia, the Western Turks. In alliance with Noshirwan of Persia, grandson of that very Firuz who had previously lost his life at the hands of the White Huns, the Turks soon put an end to the Kingdom of the Galloping Horsemen. By the end of the century, the Hun menace, as far as India was concerned, was dying out. The swift hoofbeats of their horses no longer froze the blood, and only rarely did some wild band still descend from the northern mountains, "like a wolf on the fold," to terrify the peaceful Indian villages. Persian and Turk lost no time in dividing the Hun territory between them. In the end, however, the Turks ousted the Persians and appropriated the lion's share for themselves. India, weak, impoverished and dazed, awoke after her nightmare to find herself once more free.

The political complexion of India in the second half of the sixth century is highly confusing. Scions of the Imperial Guptas continued to rule over fragments of territory, here and there, but the central power had collapsed. The debased coinage which now replaced the magnificent gold coinage of the earlier Gupta monarchs demonstrated clearly enough that the royal treasuries were empty. Small states began to emerge and assert their independence. A minor Gupta king still sat on the throne in eastern Malwa. The Maukhari Dynasty held sway at Kanauj (Kanyakubja), and Thanesar was ruled by the Vardhanas. A powerful king named Sasanka had established control in Gauda, or western Bengal. Farther east, the kingdom of Kamarupa, or Assam, followed its own independent destiny. The Maitraikas, of uncertain origin, had arisen in Gujarat, where they founded a new dynasty at Valabhi. Northern India was thoroughly exhausted, and no outstanding leader appeared to weld the broken parts of the once great Gupta Empire together again until, at the turn of the century, a new figure at last stepped onto the stage, the charming, warmhearted, enthusiastic Harsha Vardhana.

Harsha was the younger son of the Raja of Thanesar, the little state lying north of Delhi and west of Kanauj. Through his father, Harsha traced his descent from the imperial Gupta line, and through his mother, the daughter of that same Vasodharman who had inflicted a decisive defeat on the Huns, from the brave Malwa clan.

The materials for reconstructing the story of Harsha and his times are unusually ample. Two contemporary literary works supply a full-length portrait of Harsha. There are also three relevant inscriptions, one bearing Harsha's signature engraved in his own handwriting. Tiny silver coins with Harsha's bust and some of his royal seals have also drifted down across the centuries.

One of the two contemporary literary documents referred to above is a long romantic biography, the *Harsha-charita*, or "Life

of Harsha," composed by Harsha's court poet, the Brahmin Bana. It preserves a most valuable record of the thought, feeling and customs of seventh-century India, as well as vivid details of Harsha's career, but unfortunately Bana's work remains unfinished, and it covers only the early part of Harsha's life. The composition is in Sanskrit, in a highly ornate style considered the acme of polish and courtly grace in seventh-century India. We learn that Harsha's father was a lion to the Huna deer, a burning fever to the king of the Indus land, a bilious plague to the lord of Gandhara, a troubler of the sleep of Gujarat, an ax to the creeper of Malwa's glory! The Malwas, in spite of their relation by marriage to the Vardhanas, are ridiculed in stinging figures of speech. They are compared to the hind clutching the lion's mane, the frog slapping the cobra, the calf taking the tiger captive. The young Harsha's royal toenails, in the approved phraseology, are rosy with the reflected light of the jeweled diadems of innumerable kings bowing in obeisance at his footstool.

According to Bana, one of those late sporadic Hun raids into the territory of Thanesar took place when Prince Harsha was a boy of fifteen. The old raja had played a notable part in helping to drive the invaders back out of India when he was younger, but now he was too infirm to undertake a new campaign. So he dispatched his army under the leadership of Prince Rajya, Harsha's elder brother. Harsha accompanied his brother part of the way, but on account of his youth he was ordered to remain behind with a detachment of cavalry in the foothills of the Himalayas, and here he enjoyed himself in hunting. "His bow drawn to the ear, he emitted a rain of shining shafts, which in a comparatively few days left the forest empty of wild creatures." While he was thus amusing himself a messenger arrived in great haste to report that the old king had fallen dangerously ill. Harsha hurried back to Thanesar, arriving only just in time to receive the dying king's injunction: "Succeed to this world; appropriate my treasures; make prize of the feudatory kings;

support the burden of royalty; protect the people; practise yourself in arms; annihilate your foes."

Then followed a series of domestic tragedies, no doubt reflecting the precarious conditions and the general disorder and unrest of the period. Swift camel riders were sent to summon Prince Rajya, who came back to the capital adorned with long bandages binding up the arrow wounds he had received at the hands of the Huns. He had no sooner arrived than the news of fresh disasters poured in. The ruler of western Malwa had assassinated the crown prince of Kanauj, married to Rajyasri, younger sister of Rajya and Harsha, and Rajyasri herself was said to have been cast into prison and insulted by having iron fetters placed on her tender feet. Prince Rajya set off with the army to rescue his sister and chastise the Malwa foe. Rajyasri, meanwhile, unknown to her brother, managed to escape from her prison at Kanauj and fled away to a Buddhist hermitage in the Vindhya mountains. Though victor in the battle, almost immediately afterwards Rajya himself was slain through a treacherous intrigue plotted by Sasanka, king of Gauda, the ally of Malwa. It was now the turn of Harsha to go in search of his sister, and with dramatic timeliness he found her just as, out of despair and grief, she was mounting her own funeral pyre to commit suicide. After the safe return of Harsha and Rajyasri, and with the approval of the state ministers and counselors, Harsha celebrated his coronation and ascended not only the throne of Thanesar, to which he was heir, but the vacant throne of Kanauj as well. This was in the year 606, afterwards chosen to mark the beginning of the new Harsha Era, which continued to be used for several centuries over a large part of northern India and Nepal.

Between this date and his death in 648, he succeeded in making himself master of an empire very little smaller in extent than the one which had been ruled by Chandragupta Vikramaditya. It stretched without a break from the Punjab to Bengal and Orissa.

Most of Harsha's military conquests, it appears, were made soon after he became king. We are told that for six years the royal elephants were never unharnessed nor the soldiers unbelted. Only on one single occasion did Harsha suffer a serious reverse. Acting on the assurance of certain subordinate princes that "the Deccan is easily won at the price of valor," he set out with a huge army bent on the conquest of the Chalukyan realm south of the Narbada. He marched through the Vindhya into Maharastra, and there joined battle on the bank of the Narbada with the Chalukyan king, the proud and haughty Pulakesin II. Pulakesin followed the usual spirited Maharatta practice and sent his war elephants and a picked battalion of shock troops into the fray, frenzied with drink. In the ensuing conflict, Harsha's forces were thoroughly routed and had to beat an inglorious retreat back to the other side of the Vindhya. Harsha never again attempted a trial of strength with his doughty Chalukyan rival, who remained undisputed master in his own territory until his death a few years later at the hands of the southern Pallavas. Harsha contented himself with his northern empire, and spent his remaining energy in consolidating what he had already won and in promoting the material, intellectual and spiritual welfare of his subjects.

It so happened that towards the end of Harsha's reign the most illustrious of all the early Chinese pilgrims paid a prolonged visit to India. This was no other than the famous Yuan Chwang (Hiuen Tsiang), who later on wrote a fascinating and detailed account of his travels to India under the title of *Si-yu-ki*, or "Records of the Western World" — India then being "western" from the Chinese point of view. Known as the Master of the Law on account of his great learning and scholarship, Yuan Chwang was certainly one of the most distinguished men of his day, and he not only had unusual facilities to see India but the sensitive and intelligent mind to register impressions without distortion or bias. In the course of his narrative he has a good deal to say about Harsha, and it is significant that he corroborates

in a remarkable way all that Bana has to say of Harsha in his more flowery biography.

Taken together, these two accounts picture Harsha as a benevolent and able ruler, perhaps lacking the supreme greatness of an Asoka, but nevertheless a king of whom any country might be proud. One part of his day he assigned to affairs of state and two parts to works of benevolence, and he found the time all too short. Yet he was practical enough to see that his military establishments remained strong. He had inherited a substantial army consisting of 5000 elephants, 20,000 horsemen and 50,000 infantry, and this force he soon expanded to 60,000 elephants and 100,000 cavalry. The traditional fourth arm of an Indian army, the cumbersome war chariots, Harsha seems to have had the discretion to discard, since there is no mention of them in accounts of battles after his time. Justice, according to the current ideas, was considerably rendered by Harsha, and the people were not oppressed with heavy taxes. The state revenue was derived mainly from the customary tax amounting to one sixth of the gross produce of the crown lands. Out of this, Harsha devoted one fourth to expenses of government, one fourth to the endowment of public servants, one fourth to charity distributed among the various religious sects and the remaining fourth to rewarding high intellectual achievement.

In religious matters, Harsha followed the wise example of his predecessors, and showed himself to be extraordinarily tolerant. At his capital of Kanauj, there were two hundred Hindu temples and one hundred Buddhist monasteries. His father had been a devout worshipper of Aditya, the Sun, a deity at one time greatly favored in India. Harsha's elder brother Rajya appears to have been the first member of the family to turn Buddhist. Harsha's sister likewise favored Buddhism, or she would scarcely have selected a Buddhist hermitage as a place of refuge after her husband's death, and Harsha himself was converted to the Mahayana form of Buddhism through the persuasive eloquence of no other person than the Chinese scholar

Yuan Chwang, but Harsha's was a happy Buddhism, not overburdened with painful austerities. Even as a Buddhist, though he is said to have erected thousands of stupas, each of them 100 feet high, and to have built innumerable monasteries, he continued to pay open reverence to both the Sun-god and Shiva. His sincere acceptance of Buddhist ideals, however, was revealed in the law he promulgated forbidding under severe penalties the use of animal food throughout the length and breadth of the territory he ruled.

Like his great Gupta predecessors, Harsha was a liberal patron of letters. He was very fond of holding poetical contests at his court. Literary men would assemble and read aloud before a critical assembly their own poetical compositions. Harsha himself no doubt often took part in these contests. He was a dramatist of no mean ability. Of his three surviving plays—the *Ratnavali*, or "Necklace," the *Priyadarsika*, or "Gracious Lady," and the *Nagananda*—at least one has been translated into foreign languages and staged on more than one occasion in European theaters. The *Nagananda* begins with a direct invocation to Buddha, and presents the story of the Bodhisattva Jimutavahana, who saved the race of Nagas, or serpents, from destruction by offering himself in their place to Vishnu's bird Garuda, mortal enemy of all serpents. The play is in five acts, and it was set to music and performed at Harsha's own court.

Asoka had set a pattern of royal benevolence by establishing and maintaining free resthouses and hospitals all over his empire. The Guptas did the same, and Harsha followed in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessors, and outdid them all. In the state hospitals, doctors were in constant attendance, and free resthouses provided accommodations for travelers and poor persons. In daily charity, Harsha fed from the royal kitchens a thousand Buddhist monks and five hundred Brahmins. But this was not the limit of his charity. Asoka is said to have distributed his wealth three times over, during his lifetime, but Harsha

actually made six such distributions. It would be hard to find any historical parallel for such extreme generosity. Every five years, an immense assembly was held at Prayag (Allahabad), and on each occasion Harsha gave away in charity to Buddhists, Brahmins, ascetics, the poor and the destitute, everything that had accumulated in the imperial treasury except just enough to keep the army properly equipped. As a final act of grace, but with never a trace of royal arrogance in his manner, the king even gave away his own jewels and garments, the jewels being used by the monks to defray the cost of copying sacred manuscripts.

What makes Harsha really unique, however, is the tenderness and sweetness which permeated his whole nature. It expressed itself in his deep affection for his parents, his devotion to his elder brother, his love and respect for his widowed sister, his loyalty to his friends. Harsha is the last great pre-Islamic king of northern India who lived and ruled in accordance with the ancient traditional Indian ideals of kingship.

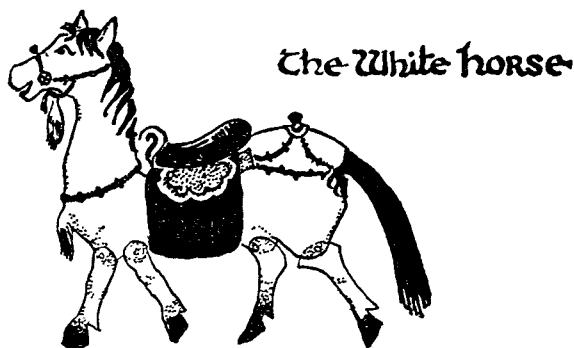
Since Harsha owes the preservation of his fame to a large extent to Yuan Chwang, author of the most complete and objective literary record extant of seventh-century India, an account of this Chinese worthy will not be out of place. Apart from his own translated works, now not easily available, René Grousset's *In the Footsteps of the Buddha* has retold in simple language the vivid story of Yuan Chwang.

He, too, like Fa Hian two and a quarter centuries before him, set out on his journey to India with the object of searching for authoritative Buddhist works, but above all he wanted to steep himself in the fundamental truths and spirit of Buddhism. When he left China in A.D. 629, he was already, at the age of twenty-six, a scholar of high rank. To his intellectual attainments he added an extremely handsome appearance, and that indefinable quality of personality which came from good birth and breeding. That he was intrepid and fearless is clear enough from his own narrative. He was also a man of unshakable faith and



of unswervable determination, and the integrity of his character none could ever question.

China was just then passing through a period of intense political turmoil. Tai Tsung, founder of the great Tang Dynasty, had very recently become emperor. As Prince Tsin, he had through his own audacity and genius subdued or won over the many petty states into which China had been broken up and had united them in one great empire. But the outer territories were still in rebellion, and when Yuan Chwang applied for a passport to go to India, Tai Tsung had no mind to risk the life of one of his most distinguished subjects by allowing him to undertake this venturesome journey. Yuan Chwang was refused permission to leave China. Not easily dissuaded from an enterprise on which he had set his heart, Yuan Chwang then slipped out secretly one night past the Jade Gate on the frontier. Hiding by day and traveling by night, lest he be arrested and sent back, he cautiously made his way past one after another of the garrisoned Chinese watchtowers which extended far out into central Asia. This danger past, others beset him. He lost his way in the waterless desert and was all but dying of thirst. His old roan horse, too weak to proceed another step, lay down in the sandy waste. At this crisis, Yuan Chwang prayed fervently to the merciful Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. "On this journey I covet



neither riches nor praise nor fame. My sole aim is to go and seek the Higher Intelligence and the True Law!" he said. And now was all to be lost, because of his lonely death for want of a drink of water? The intensity and purity of his purpose had their reward. Strength suddenly surged back into his fainting limbs. The horse got up on its feet, and without guidance, or actually against such guidance at Yuan Chwang weakly sought to give him, the animal miraculously found its way to water and grass.

Though the Master of the Law traveled to India in the humble spirit of a disciple, India at once recognized his superior qualities and did honor to her distinguished guest. As he approached the capital of Kashmir, the king himself came out to meet Yuan Chwang and escort him to the monastery where he was to take up his residence. The roads were strewn with flowers and sprinkled with perfumes. Here Yuan Chwang settled down to brush up his Sanskrit and study philosophy with a venerable Mahayanist teacher, considered a leading authority in the Idealist School founded by the fifth-century philosophers, the two brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu. When the king of Kashmir learned of Yuan Chwang's desire to obtain authoritative texts, he placed the services of twenty scribes at his disposal to make copies of all the important Buddhist books. At the end of two

years, Yuan Chwang took up his pilgrimage again. Journeying southward, he spent months at a stretch in various noted monasteries along the way. But his arduous studies were merely a prelude to his long stay at the world-famous Buddhist university of Nalanda, situated not far from Gaya. His fame had preceded him and as he drew near Nalanda, two hundred monks, followed by a thousand laymen, came forth to meet him in a great procession, with parasols and banners, flowers and incense. He was led to the monastic enclosure where a gong was sounded in his honor, as the Master of the Law was publicly invited to take up his residence in Nalanda Monastery, to make use of its utensils and everything of which he might have need. When he was conducted into the presence of the venerable abbot Silabhadra, the latter could not restrain his tears at sight of him. His arrival was the fulfillment of a dream in which just such a monk from China had come with the sole object of being instructed in the Mahayana doctrine.

Yuan Chwang spent altogether five years at Nalanda. It was during this period that he received repeated royal summonses from Harsha to visit him. The Indian king expressed an ardent desire to hear Yuan Chwang discourse on philosophic and religious topics. But Yuan Chwang did not wish to interrupt his serious studies, and politely but firmly refused. A similar imperative summons soliciting a visit from the famous Chinese scholar came from Kumara, king of Kamarupa, or Assam. Kumara, sometimes also known as Bhaskara, was a Hindu, yet he expressed the utmost respect for Buddhism, and eagerly desired to surround himself with wise and learned men. This invitation, too, Yuan Chwang felt compelled to refuse. When a messenger arrived from Kumara for the third time, bringing with him a warning that if Yuan Chwang did not come to Assam forthwith, Kumara would send an army and elephants and trample Nalanda into dust, the abbot Silabhadra prudently urged his guest to depart without further delay. Upon his arrival in Assam, Yuan Chwang expressed his regret at not finding a single

Buddhist monastery in that easternmost part of India, but he noted in the record of his travels that the people, like their ruler, were earnest in study and possessed remarkably retentive memories. One question put to him by Kumara concerned certain Chinese songs which celebrated the victories of Prince Tsin, now the great Tai Tsung, and which were then popular even in India, it appears. His interest in China no doubt stimulated by the visit of Yuan Chwang, Kumara is reported later on to have asked a Chinese ambassador at the court of Harsha to procure for him, or have made for him, a Sanskrit translation of the *Tao-te-ching*, the famous work of the philosopher Lao Tzu, who lived in China in the sixth century B.C. Details like these throw an illuminating sidelight on early cultural relations between China and India, in Harsha's time.

While Yuan Chwang was still a guest of Kumara, Harsha learned that the Master of the Law was visiting his vassal. Kumara received a peremptory order to send on the priest from China at once. To this, Kumara returned the spirited reply that Harsha might take his head, but certainly not his guest. When the royal messenger next arrived, he delivered only the simple communication, "Send the head at once!" Kumara thought somewhat better of his first hasty retort. Prompt preparations were made not only for sending Yuan Chwang to the emperor, but for Kumara to accompany him.

The cortege included an incredible number of elephants and river boats. It set out from Assam and proceeded by way of the Ganges. The elephants moved slowly along the bank while the boats progressed in midstream, until they reached the place in Bengal where Harsha was encamped. Kumara had a pavilion-of-travel set up for Yuan Chwang, in which he was invited to rest, while Kumara crossed the river to make his peace with Harsha.

It was arranged that Harsha would come on the following day to meet the Master of the Law, but he felt too impatient to wait. That very same night, thousands of lighted torches were sud-

denly seen approaching from the middle of the river. There could be no doubt that the royal procession was on its way. Harsha's hundred music-pa<sup>ce</sup>-drums were solemnly sounding one stroke in unison, at each step taken by the king. Harsha appeared before the Master, bowed low and touched his feet in token of his supreme respect for Yuan Chwang's spiritual attainments. After welcoming him in suitable language and appointing another meeting for the next day, the king then politely withdrew.

At the second meeting the following day, Harsha's widowed sister, Rajyasri, was also present. Harsha asked to examine and have explained to him a work of Yuan Chwang, written in support of the Mahayana doctrine. He was at once converted, and then and there decided upon holding one of those great open, philosophic debates in which the intellectual elite of India had always taken particular delight. Messengers were sent in all directions to summon leading scholars and religious men to attend the forthcoming assembly, which was to be held at Kanauj. Orders were given at the same time for the erection of two vast pavilions. Then the two Indian kings, Harsha and Kumara, and their suites marched along their respective sides of the river. Kumara marched along the northern bank, and Harsha, accompanied by Yuan Chwang, marched along the southern bank. It took them three months to reach the capital.

By the time they arrived, several thousands of Buddhist monks representing both the Greater and Lesser Vehicles, of whom one thousand had come from Nalanda alone, and three thousand Brahmins and Jains were already collected. The eighteen vassal kings required to attend upon Harsha, together with their numerous retinues, were also waiting to receive them. The assembly opened with a grand procession. A gold image of Buddha was placed on the back of an elephant. On the right walked Harsha, dressed as Indra and carrying a white yaktail fly whisk, and on the left walked Kumara, dressed as Brahma and carrying a costly parasol. Harsha scattered pearls and other precious stones

and flowers made of gold and silver along the route of the procession. Yuan Chwang and the other high dignitaries were mounted on state elephants. When the procession reached the gate of the enclosure which had been prepared, the precious image was taken to a special altar and ceremoniously washed by Harsha with perfumed water before it was carried up to the top of a tall tower, constructed for the purpose. Those in attendance who could not be accommodated within the pavilions had to remain outside, but all were fed and presented with clothes, and gold pieces were distributed.

The monk from China was then invited to take the seat of honor and preside. The assembly was informed of the theme of the discourse to follow, and a copy of the main points was hung up outside the gates, to which was appended a notice that if anyone could find any flaw in the argument or refute it, Yuan Chwang would give his head. For five days the discourse went on smoothly, and many of the audience, including Rajyasri, who had previously been inclined to favor the Hinayana school, were converted by Yuan Chwang's eloquence and lucid exposition. But this state of affairs naturally aroused the jealousy both of the Brahmins and the Hinayanists. First the Hinayanists concocted a plot to do away with Yuan Chwang. Somehow getting wind of what was in the air, the mild Harsha issued a proclamation to the effect that if anyone hurt or injured the Master of the Law he should forthwith be beheaded, and if anyone even spoke ill of him, he should have his tongue cut out! This effectively silenced the opposition, at least for a time, but the Brahmins went on secretly nursing their grudge. On the final day of the assembly, which had by then lasted more than three weeks, they hatched a plot of their own. One of the straw-roofed pavilions was set on fire with burning arrows, and in the general excitement a hired assassin made a bold attempt to kill Harsha with a knife. The king himself caught hold of him and disarmed him, and the guilty Brahmins were forthwith banished to the frontiers of his kingdom. These dramatic developments no doubt marred

the concluding ceremonies, which consisted of another grand procession in which Yuan Chwang was led about the town on an elephant as a tribute to his success in overthrowing all opponents. In fairness to the latter, it has to be acknowledged that they may have been overthrown not so much by the pure logic of Yuan Chwang as by the threat of dire punishment, and its quick execution, at the royal order of Harsha. Yet the fact that seventh-century India found such obvious satisfaction in great parliaments of religion and philosophic discussion is certainly a tribute to the intellectual and cultural standards and general good taste of the age of Harsha. They did much to create that feeling of reverence for India as the home of true spiritual enlightenment, held by the rest of Asia.

Yuan Chwang's knowledge of India was by no means confined solely to the northern and eastern part of the country. In 639, five years before the assembly at Kanauj, he had already visited the Pallava capital of Kanchi. There he found a hundred monasteries, with ten thousand resident monks, most of whom were Mahayanists. There were also eighty Hindu temples, and many Jains. Yuan Chwang had intended to take ship from the neighboring port of Mamallapuram for Ceylon. Just at the time of his visit, however, refugees from the island kingdom began to arrive at the court of the Pallava king, Narasimha. After hearing their report of serious dynastic trouble in Ceylon, Yuan Chwang reluctantly gave up his plan of going there and instead crossed the Deccan into the Chalukyan territory of Pulakesin II. Of this Chalukyan king and his people, he has left an extraordinarily vivid description. They seemed to him stern and vindictive in character, relentless to their enemies but ever grateful to their benefactors. They were proud and passionate, but esteemed honor and duty above all else, and cared absolutely nothing for death. They were fond of learning and sufficiently open-minded to study both orthodox and unorthodox texts, in other words, both Buddhism and Hinduism, and all their various sects. Though Pulakesin himself was a Saivite Hindu, many

important Buddhist centers were within his realm. Yuan Chwang traveled northward from Nasik into Malwa, and also paid a brief visit to the Maitreka kingdom of Valabhi in Gujarat, before finally returning to Nalanda. The reigning prince of Valabhi was Dhruvasena, then the son-in-law of Harsha. Like the latter, he had adopted the Buddhist faith, and Yuan Chwang accorded him his praise. A great assembly was held every year at Valabhi, after the pattern of Harsha's quinquennial assemblies, in which dishes, garments, medicines and jewels were freely distributed to the monks. Yuan Chwang's Chinese disciple and biographer, Hwui-li, who must have had long talks with the Master after his return to China, refers to the immense prosperity of Gujarat. "One sees in this kingdom miles of precious merchandise from foreign lands," he comments. "There are more than a hundred families whose fortune amounts to over a million ounces of silver."

At last, against the entreaties of all his friends at Nalanda, Yuan Chwang made up his mind that the time had come for him to turn his face to the homeland. He had left China in 629, and it was now 643. He had been away for fifteen strenuous years. He felt that the treasure of true knowledge garnered in India must now be shared with his brother monks in China. Before setting out on the long journey, he went to take leave of Harsha, and the picture he has left of the parting scene between himself and the Indian king is a masterpiece.

Harsha vainly tried to dissuade Yuan Chwang from his intention to return to China, but seeing that the Master was now fixed in his determination to go home, he offered him gold and other valuable gifts as a farewell present. With quiet dignity, Yuan Chwang refused everything, insisting that he had no wants. But he finally accepted a fur-lined garment from his old admirer Kumara, as protection against the bitter winds he knew he would encounter on the high mountain passes in the north, and in the open wastes of central Asia. Harsha provided an escort and royal letters (written on cotton cloth and sealed with red

wax), to ensure his safety up to the confines of the empire. He also gave him an elephant for his personal use and arranged for horse transport for his large collection of relics, pictures, statues and the 657 Sanskrit manuscripts Yuan Chwang had collected as harvest of his sojourn in India. The two Indian kings, Harsha and Kumara, then accompanied the Master of the Law on the first lap of his journey, in the direction of Prayag, and bade him a regretful farewell, with tears and sighs. But this was not the final leave-taking. Three days later, mounted on fast horses and with a party of a hundred horsemen, Harsha and Kumara once more overtook Yuan Chwang to his great surprise. They had galloped after him to say good-by once more, this time forever.

Yuan Chwang journeyed slowly on his way, taking nine months to reach the Indus. He crossed the river on his elephant, and the precious manuscripts and other treasures were placed on a boat. A sudden storm arose, lashing the waves into a fury, and the boat nearly capsized in midstream. Many of the manuscripts fell into the water, and fifty of them were rapidly swept away. Yuan Chwang also lost a collection of seeds of Indian flowers he had made, fondly hoping to introduce these into China. Hearing of his loss, the ruler of Kapisa, the territory Yuan Chwang was now about to traverse, generously had all the missing manuscripts recopied for him. On Yuan Chwang's ultimate return to his own country, he was feted and honored, and the great Tai Tsung summoned him for interview and gave him his imperial blessings and patronage. From this time onward, Yuan Chwang spent the remaining years of his life in the arduous task of translating his hundreds of manuscripts into Chinese, with the help of a qualified staff, and it was at the special order of the Emperor of China that he wrote out in great detail the full account of his journey to India and his long residence there.

It is clear that Harsha, in spite of his personal humility and romantic generosity, shared none of Asoka's qualms of conscience about an empire he had won practically singlehanded, by military conquest. The prudent care with which he main-

tained his military establishments showed that he intended to keep all he had won. Inspired by the visit of Yuan Chwang, he also had in mind the fostering of friendly relations with the mighty sister empire of China, on a basis of perfect equality. While Yuan Chwang was still in India, Harsha had already sent a Brahmin envoy to Tai Tsung. In return, he received a Chinese mission, and soon after came a second one, which traveled to India by an unfrequented route across Tibet, arriving at Kanauj in 648, only to find that Harsha Vardhana had just been murdered at the instigation of one of his Brahmin ministers.

Instead of being received in India with the courteous attention which was their due, the imperial messengers of Tai Tsung, in the confusion and rebellion following Harsha's murder, were insulted and robbed, and thirty horsemen of their escort met a treacherous death. Wang-hiuen-tse, leader of the mission, barely escaped with his life by fleeing across the mountains into Nepal. Nepal at this time was in a position of subordinate alliance with Tibet, and it so happened that the Tibetan king, Srong-tsan-Gampo, was on the friendliest of terms with the Chinese emperor Tai Tsung, who was his own father-in-law. It was easy for Wang to enlist the sympathy of both Nepal and Tibet, and he soon reappeared in India with a formidable little army, which was further increased by a force contributed by Kumara of Assam. More than five hundred Indian walled towns and villages were overrun, and large numbers of the population were captured and ruthlessly beheaded. Arjuna, Harsha's assassinator, was marched off in chains to China, and India saw and heard no more of him.

The insult to the Chinese envoys was wiped out, but political chaos only deepened as a result of this new foreign invasion, launched for the first time from the northeast. The invaders did not attempt to remain in India, but who was to restore order within the imperial domain? Harsha unfortunately had left no male heir. His untimely removal was a signal for the usual disruption inherent in such a situation, and the imposing edifice of

a paramount power in northern India came tumbling down. The eighteen feudatory kings who had formerly acknowledged allegiance felt free to go their own ways, and some of them lost no time in trying to aggrandize themselves at the expense of neighbors. Kumara, for example, promptly helped himself to a good slice of Bengal. In the west, a new danger arose. One of those tribal remnants of the Hunnish invasions, the Gujaras, suddenly showed an aggressive tendency. The Gujaras had already got as far as Rajputana. Now they thought the time fit to push on into Malwa, where a branch line, the Pratiharas, founded a new dynasty at Ujjain.

If there was to be a scramble for Harsha's vacant throne in northern India, the Pratiharas considered themselves well qualified to enter the competition. But some time elapsed before they eventually won. It was only in the ninth century that they finally succeeded in establishing themselves at Kanauj, still the chief city of northern India, from where they exercised imperial control over a wide territory until they were ousted by the Muslim invaders early in the eleventh century. Kanauj ignominiously fell, at the end of a single day's fighting, in 1019, to Mahmud of Ghazni. The beautiful temples and monasteries of one of India's most illustrious ancient cities were thrown down, the images broken and melted, the accumulated treasures looted by the frenzied victors. One or two insignificant Pratihara rulers continued to hold some sort of attenuated authority over a restricted domain until about the middle of the century, but the back of the Pratihara Dynasty was broken. With its subjection, the last semblance of Hindu imperial rule in northern India came to an inglorious end.

## CHAPTER XI

### *A Golden Age of Civilization*

A MILITARY DECISION on the field of battle can make or end kings or kingdoms, but political collapse does not necessarily mean the end of a cultural epoch. The great traditions laid down during the Gupta regime in India endured for many centuries, serving as the classical patterns of culture until as late as the twelfth century. It was not until India had lost her freedom twice over, first to the Muslims and then to the British, that the patterns began to grow dim and confused in outline.

All the Guptas, with the exception of one late minor ruler, chose to be Hindus. Although Buddhism held its own and even expanded during early Gupta times, by the close of the period it had definitely given way to Hinduism. After the Guptas, except for an occasional lapse back to Buddhism, as under Harsha or the Buddhist Pala kings of Bengal, or to Jainism, as under a few kings in the western Deccan and Gujarat, Hinduism was actively or tacitly accepted by the great majority of Indians, rulers and people alike. The new Hinduism, however, was a fusion of ideas and ideals drawn from the two main racial streams of Indian thought, Aryan and Dravidian. The austere idea of the Brahman, the Impersonal God of the *Upanishads*, was at last brought down and embodied as a triumphant Personal God, called Shiva by some, Vishnu by some, Devi by others, or any of their multiple names. He, or She, now supplanted all other Vedic deities, and the old gods one by one began to recede into the realm of mythology. At the same time, a Personal God demanded a new and more vivid kind of wor-

ship. As the fires died down to ashes on the Vedic altars, temple-and-image worship, approved by the Dravidians and already sanctioned by Buddhism, took the place of Vedic rituals. The Brahmin priest officiated within the temple, chanted the sacred hymns, still sat unshakably astride the social life of the community, but the worshipper prostrating himself before his chosen image forgot the priest and with fervent prayer requested his god to step down from his pedestal and enter the warm abode of the devotee's loving heart.

For the service of dynamic Hinduism, all India's immense resources and prolific artistic genius were not too much to offer. The Gupta kings, before the Hun invasions emptied the imperial treasuries, gave in unstinted measure to every kind of intellectual and artistic enterprise, and their vassals and subordinates emulated their example. India's golden age was ushered in.

The Guptas began by adopting an all-important language reform. Ignoring Prakrit, they made Sanskrit, always the traditional language of their religion, the official court language as well. Gupta scholars were soon producing great numbers of learned compilations, manuals or textbooks composed in metrical form and summarizing the ancient knowledge in such varied fields as law, philosophy, logic, poetics, architecture, sculpture, painting, dancing, music and even love-making. The Indian passion for classification and minute rules revealed itself in all these works. At the same time, subtle new systems of thought were put forward to explain the baffling problems of the universe. Scientists arose who devoted themselves to the search of truth for truth's sake. Now, also, the Brahmin pundits were called together for the last time to revise the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and the great Sanskrit epics took on the shape and emphasis they have retained ever since. Puranas, intended to popularize the Brahmanic forms of worship and religious mythology, multiplied. Collections of fables and stories grew like mushrooms. Lyric poetry and drama came into their own. Architecture reflected the developing skill of the builders, and

the sister arts associated with it reached new shining heights of perfection.

The first great burst of scholarly and literary activity was the direct outcome of the new fashion in language. Sanskrit, scientifically perfected by grammarians and poets on the basis of Panini's rules, possessed almost mathematical precision in its terminology. Philosophers, scientists and poets could express the most delicate shades of meaning, the most exact observations, the most wayward of fancies. From the fourth century onward, Sanskrit acquired the dignified status of a literary language over all India, though the various vernaculars continued to be the spoken languages of the people. Even the Buddhists felt compelled to drop Pali and adopt Sanskrit for their learned expositions. The use of Sanskrit spread to every corner of India, and was mainly responsible for the new spiritual and cultural unity which now made itself felt, drawing together south and north, east and west.

No one, at this time, foresaw the ultimate consequences. With its refined rules of grammar, Sanskrit was an extremely difficult language to learn, and its mastery demanded many years of sober study. As the craze for literacy in Sanskrit spread among the aristocratic circles, the education of the masses was proportionately neglected. Sanskrit entirely monopolized the field of scholarship, yet it was cut off from the fresh streams of the common experience of the people as a whole. On the other side of the picture, the vernaculars, Tamil excepted, were deprived of the necessary intellectual stimulus, and as a result made comparatively little progress in literary expression until the tenth and eleventh centuries.

General education, from the fourth to the twelfth centuries, was in the hands of Brahmin pundits and Buddhist monks, and was almost universally in the medium of Sanskrit, not only throughout northern India but in many centers in the Deccan and south India. The Brahmins in their asrama schools and forest universities continued to teach in the traditional manner,

but they found serious competition in the schools and colleges attached to the great Buddhist monasteries. These, with superior organization and vast wealth and splendid libraries, rapidly acquired the status of truly national seats of learning. The religious tolerance of Indian rulers was displayed by the Gupta kings who, staunch supporters of Hinduism as they were, found nothing amiss in extending generous support to Buddhist institutions. Hindu boys seem to have attended them as freely as Buddhist boys.

Among many thousands of monastic schools dating from the early centuries of the present era, the great Buddhist university of Nalanda, in Bihar, easily stood first. In the whole of Europe there were no universities to compare with it, until the universities of Paris, Bologna and Oxford were founded in the twelfth century. Though popular tradition invests Nalanda with hoary antiquity, archaeological investigation of the actual site, midway between Patna and Gaya, has produced as the two oldest datable objects a copperplate grant of Samudragupta (330-380) and a coin of his grandson Kumaragupta (415-455). Fa Hian, who visited all the important Buddhist places in northern India during the time of Chandragupta Vikramaditya (380-415), refers only casually to Nalanda village, and makes no mention of any important educational center there. It was perhaps about the end of the fourth century, or even in the fifth, after the destruction by the White Huns of the rival university of Taxila in the northwest, that Nalanda first rose to prominence, under Gupta patronage. Copperplate inscriptions record the donation of six residential halls for students by different Gupta kings or their contemporaries. Some two centuries later, according to Yuan Chwang, Harsha Vardhana handed over the revenues of one hundred large villages for the upkeep of the Nalanda establishment. Out of such endowments, he says, needy students received free tuition, board and lodging, free medicine and free clothes.

By the middle of the seventh century, Nalanda was inter-

nationally famous, and even foreign students were flocking to it from such distant places as China, Korea and Tibet. One of the particular attractions for these foreign students was the wonderful library. Three buildings were required to house the thousands of manuscripts then belonging to Nalanda, and the library quarter was known as the Mart of Knowledge. The standards of admission were extremely high. Questions put by the entrance examiners were so hard that only two or three applicants out of ten were able to answer, Yuan Chwang testifies. As a result, rejected candidates often went about the country falsely pretending to be graduates in order to reap the advantages and prestige which went with the Nalanda name. In spite of the difficulties, no fewer than five thousand students were on the Nalanda rolls when Yuan Chwang was in residence there.

During the seventh century, the place was known as a stronghold of Mahayana Buddhism, of which the saintly old abbot Silabhadra was perhaps the greatest living exponent. Yet the curriculum was broad enough to permit Yuan Chwang, a foreigner, to take courses in Brahmin philosophy. Vedic literature and grammar, the agnostic Sankya system, medicine and mathematics, and even current literary works which had nothing to do with religion, besides all the eighteen separate schools of Buddhism, were taught by competent teachers. Altogether, there were a hundred lecture halls where classes were held daily, and the day was never long enough, asserts Yuan Chwang, for asking and answering profound questions. Scholarship was measured by the number of sutra collections a student was able to master. One thousand Nalanda students could explain twenty collections satisfactorily, and five hundred could explain thirty, but only ten could expound as many as fifty collections, and of these the distinguished visitor from China himself was one.

Nalanda's importance in the seventh century was indirectly shown by the fact that time was regulated over a wide area of northern India by the great Nalanda water clock. The Chinese

monk I-tsing, who followed Yuan Chwang to India in 673 and who stayed at Nalanda long enough to copy out four hundred manuscripts totaling 500,000 verses, has left a detailed description of the famous clock. There were two copper bowls, a small one and a big one. The big one was kept full of water, and the smaller one, which had a pinhole in its bottom, floated on top until it filled and sank. The time required for four immersions was taken as equivalent to one standard "hour," or watch. The day, starting with sunrise, was divided into four watches, and night into another four. Boys announced each submersion by a proper number of drumbeats or blasts on a conch shell. I-tsing was deeply impressed by the Nalanda clepsydra. He thought it far superior to the Chinese sundial, since it could record time by night as well as by day and was not dependent on fair weather for its functioning, and he strongly recommended all Chinese monasteries to adopt water clocks of the Indian type.

I-tsing's account of the prevailing system of primary education in India as he saw it at a monastic school at Tamralipti (Tamluk), the port in Bengal at which he first landed, is most informative. Indian boys began their education at six, with the forty-nine letters of the Sanskrit alphabet studied in an alphabet book of three hundred slokas, or verses. They were expected to learn this primer by heart in six months. At eight they took up a simplified version in one thousand slokas of Panini's grammar. At ten they were promoted to roots, cases, conjugations, and the formation of Sanskrit words, which prepared them, at thirteen, for Panini's original work. After this they were considered sufficiently advanced to make compositions of their own in prose and verse, and to enter upon the serious study of logic and metaphysics. I-tsing advised Chinese monks intending to visit India to begin by mastering the standard textbooks of the Indian schoolboy. They were urged to imitate the well-known example of the great scholar Confucius, whose diligent study three times wore away the leather binding of the *Yi-king*, or that other fa-

mous scholar Sui-shih, who never rested content until he had read a book through one hundred times!

In addition to Nalanda, there were two other northern Buddhist educational centers long of great influence, Valabhi in Gujarat, Vikramasila in Bihar. The reputation of the monastic college at Valabhi, founded in the sixth century, stood almost as high as Nalanda. The ruins of Vikramasila lie near the modern Bengal town of Bhagalpur. This place owed its prosperity from the eighth to the twelfth centuries to the generous patronage of the Pala kings of Bengal and Bihar. So numerous were the Tibetan students in attendance that a separate hostel had to be maintained for them. Vikramasila specialized in grammar, logic, metaphysics and ritualism. Graduates received diplomas and titles from the Pala kings, who acted as chancellors of the institution, and portraits of distinguished alumni were hung in the college halls. Best known of all Vikramasila scholars was the famous Indian monk Atisa, who later went to Tibet and played an active part in the reformation of Tibetan Buddhism in the eleventh century.

Night was to descend on all the great centers of traditional Indian learning, however, when the untutored Muslims of central Asia poured into India with fire and sword at the beginning of the eleventh century. Their first act was to raze to the ground monasteries and temples which in their eyes savored of idolatrous worship. With the monasteries, of course, went the schools and colleges. Nalanda was burned down. Most of the inmates were put to death, and smoke from burning manuscripts hung for days like a dark pall over the low Nalanda hills. A Muslim account of the destruction of Vikramasila, in 1203, reveals that the place was at first mistaken for a fort, and the shaven-headed Buddhist monks were presumed to be hated Brahmin priests. "There were a number of books on the religion of the Hindus there," the chronicle states, "and when all the books came under the observation of the Mussalmans, they summoned a number

of Hindus that they might give them information respecting the import of these books; but the whole of the Hindus had been killed. When they finally became acquainted with the contents of these books, it was found that the whole fortress and city was a college."

Higher education in India at this time, as in medieval Europe, very often led to monkhood, and the scholarly contributions of some of these early Buddhist monks were of profound importance in the subsequent history of Buddhism. A number of these works, written in Sanskrit, by unknown authors, dealt with that branch of the Buddhist faith that arose in the first century A.D. in the reign of Kanishka; they form, in fact, the earliest texts on Mahayana Buddhism. They belong roughly to the first three centuries A.D. They include the *Lalita-vistara*, a miraculous life of the Buddha, the *Sadharmapundarikā Sutra*, Lotus of the True Law, the *Maha-prajnaparamitra Sutra*, Sutra of Transcendental Wisdom, and the *Lankavatara Sutra*, Sutra of Self-realization of Noble Wisdom. All were quickly translated into Chinese and Tibetan. When the Sanskrit originals later became irretrievably lost in India, it was through the medium of these foreign translations that the basic texts of early Mahayana Buddhism were again restored to the world.

Mahayanist authors whose names have fortunately survived, and who belong to about the same general period, are Asvaghosa and Nagarjuna. Asvaghosa was a picturesque figure in Buddhist Peshawar during Kanishka's time. With the *Lalita-vistara* as his model, he composed a popular poetic life of the Buddha, called the *Buddha-charita*. He was also the author of two philosophical works studied for centuries in all Buddhist centers of Asia, the *Lankara Sutra* and the *Mahayana-Sraddhotpada*. Nagarjuna, who was born in the Deccan, traveled widely throughout India in order to propagate his special interpretation of the old troublesome question of being and non-being. His principal work, the *Madhyamika*, or "Middle Way," dealt with the proposition that mind in itself could never grasp reality, since mind, ego and

sense objects were equally unreal. All that could possibly be said to exist was *Sunyata*, defined in negative terms as a Void.

Somewhere about the beginning of the fifth century, two great figures arose in Peshawar. These were the brothers Asanga and Vasubhandu. Starting from the position of Nagarjuna, which denied existence to the outside world, they became the founders of the Yogacara, or Idealist School, which asserted that the apparent world was a purely mental construction and that reality was the infinity of possible ideas, the dream of a dream, as it were. Mystic apprehension of the essential nature of the dream was possible through introspection and meditation, not logic or reason. This was the teaching that Yuan Chwang studied under the venerable Silabhadra. It deeply influenced the development of Mahayana Buddhism in China, Japan, Nepal and Tibet.

In spite of the certainty that the ordinary intellect was incapable of finding out the truth of things, for practical purposes Buddhists had to meet their many opponents and try to defend their philosophic views. In the sixth and seventh centuries, respectfully, two brilliant thinkers, Dignaga and Dharmakirti, provided Mahayana Buddhism with a formal logic and a method of dialectics, or art of disputation. Both these scholars came from southern India, but both went north to complete their studies at Nalanda. Dignaga was a direct pupil of Vasubhandu, and his works on logic afterwards formed the basis for seven exhaustive compilations on the same subject by Dharmakirti, covering a theory of sensation, of understanding, of judgment, inference and syllogism. Such were some of the keen minds which rallied to the support of Buddhism in this brilliant early epoch, and which established high standards of intellectual achievement.

Nevertheless, the tide was slowly and inevitably turning in favor of Hinduism. Orthodox Hinduism had also produced its several schools of thought, and the mystic Yoga, the evolutionary and dualistic Sankhya, the realistic Nyaya-Vaisheshika, the monastic Vedanta, each had powerful advocates. Probably the

greatest single force in the final overthrow of Buddhism in India was Shankaracharya, usually described as the most powerful intellect India has ever seen. It was Shankaracharya who set out to destroy Buddhist "heresies" at the root, and he succeeded so well that Buddhism, except in Bengal, where it had a brief extension of life for a few more centuries, soon showed all the marks of a dying religion in India. It survives today only as a ghostly reminiscence of itself in a few out-of-the-way corners in the land of its birth.

Shankara's austere magnificent concept of unity was obviously not for the masses, and these clung with greater enthusiasm than ever to their dual belief in God on the one hand, and His creation, man and world, on the other. Krishna worship, especially, became immensely popular, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, in which Krishna is the wellspring of the very highest Indian philosophy, now attained its present lofty position as the Hindu equivalent of the Western Bible.

Krishna, also called Vasudeva, came to be looked upon by Hindus as one of the two great human Incarnations of Vishnu, and also as the founder of the Bhagavata religion, the religion of devotion to a personal God. Krishna-Vasudeva was no doubt a real person, a great human teacher of profound spiritual truths, like Gotama Buddha. The first mention of him goes back to the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, which means that he must have lived before the sixth century B.C. In the *Mahabharata*, he is represented also as a king of the Vrishnis, a branch of the Yadavas, who had Mathura as their first, and Dwarka, as their second capital. In the earliest accounts, nothing is said about the boyhood of Krishna. In the period of the later puranas, however, a new popular Krishna appears — baby Krishna, full of mischievous pranks, and Krishna the charming youth, companion of the cowherds and milkmaids of Brindaban on the opposite side of the Jumna from Mathura, with a peacock feather in his headdress and a flute in his hands. This new Krishna, superim-

posed on the other and identified with Vishnu, or Narayana, rapidly won the hearts of millions of devotees.

The Krishna legend, painted and sung and sculptured all over medieval India, is briefly this. The baby was the eighth son of Devaki and Vasudeva, of the Vrishni clan. All the brothers except one, the seventh, had been immediately destroyed by Devaki's brother Kansa, the cruel king of the Yadavas, who feared that a child of Devaki's might one day bring about his uncle's death and claim the throne for himself. The seventh son, Balarama had been miraculously transferred by Vishnu himself from Devaki's womb to the womb of her co-wife Rohini, so that the baby might be saved. Then Vishnu incarnated himself in Devaki's womb, as her eighth child. Once again Kansa set guards about the house of Vasudeva, with orders that when the child was born he should at once be slain. But a mysterious sleep fell upon the guards when Krishna took birth, cloudy blue in color, a diadem on his head, yellow garments upon his body and the four symbols of Vishnu in his hand. His father Vasudeva carried him swiftly across the Jumna to the village of Gokula, in Braj, exchanging him for the newly born daughter of the kindly herdsman Nanda and his wife Yasoda, who were quite unaware of the exchange and who thought Krishna their own little son. Yet soon enough strange things began to happen, proving that Krishna was no ordinary child. The demoness Putana came in the guise of a beautiful woman to Yasoda's house, and took the baby on her lap to nurse him. As Krishna drew the poisoned milk from her breast with which she had thought to kill him, he drew the life out of her and she fell dead, assuming her own horrid shape as she did so. Once he lay under a cart sucking his toe. Another demoness sat on the cart intending to crush him, but Krishna gave a kick. The cart broke, and the demoness was killed, though the baby Krishna remained unhurt. On another occasion, Yasoda chanced to look into his mouth as he yawned. For one flash, she saw the whole

universe revealed there. But at other times Krishna was just a mischievous child. He used to steal curds, and the people of Braj called him an adorable butter-thief.

Nanda and Yasoda moved to Brindaban, not far away, and Rohini and Balarama, for safety's sake, also went to live in the same place. The two boys were now old enough to tend the cows and went out daily to the forest with the other herdboys and girls, the *gopas* and *gopis*, of Brindaban. Krishna, now known as Govinda, the Divine Cowherd, was the darling of them all. He played his flute and the trees bent to him, the cows ran to him, the *gopis* caressed him with their loving eyes. Sometimes he saved them from frightful dangers. A serpent king, named Kaliya, used to make the Jumna boil with his poison. Krishna jumped into the water and danced on his thousand heads, until the wives of Kaliya came up to the surface and with folded palms besought Krishna to spare the life of their husband, promising that henceforth he would practise the vow of non-injury. The god Brahma, out of jealousy, stole all the boys and girls and their cows, and hid them in a cave for a whole year. Krishna created changelings to take their place so that none knew they were gone, until Brahma, ashamed, at last released his prisoners. The god Indra sent an army of rain clouds to sweep Brindaban away. Krishna lifted Mount Govardhan on his little finger and held it up for seven days and seven nights, so that all the people and the cattle might find shelter from the terrible deluge. Sometimes he continued to play his old mischievous tricks. Once when the *gopis* went to bathe in a secluded spot, he stole their clothes and hung them on a tree, forcing them to beg with folded hands for the return of their garments. But whatever the Beloved did, the *gopis* only loved him the more, and when he ran away from them and disappeared in the forest, the light of the world went out for them. They wandered disconsolate, seeking him everywhere, until he reappeared in their midst, and their previous pain was forgotten in present joy. The *gopis* grew quite shameless in their love for Krishna. They



Krishna charms the milkmaids with his flute ..

forgot their husbands, their homes. Only Krishna mattered, and one of them, Radha, lived in such ecstasy of consuming love that she almost died of agony at every moment of separation from the Beloved. In the autumn month of Karttik, in the moonlight, Krishna danced the *ras lila* with the gopis and, strangely, each girl in the lovely circle imagined he was dancing with her alone. They did not understand that their Beloved was no ordinary mortal. To them, the Lord was a human being like themselves, and they loved him with body and mind and soul. Nevertheless, because he was divine, and not human, this passionate love of Krishna was the means of their purification. For a time came when Krishna, Balarama and all the cowherds of Brindaban, leaving the gopis behind, went away to Mathura to attend a great tournament planned by Kansa for the secret purpose of killing Krishna. Krishna knew that the play of Brindaban was over. Before he left, he taught the gopis that henceforth they must abandon the thought of pleasure and meditate upon him as yogis meditate, in order to become one with him. This was the path of Bhakti, of utter self-surrender to the Lord.

After this, Krishna performed many miraculous feats at Mathura, such as breaking Shiva's great bow. He defeated the opponents sent against him in wrestling matches, and he killed Kansa, as he was destined to do, and became king in his place. But Mathura soon after became infested with a vast army of fiends. Summoning Visvakarman, the artificer of the gods, Krishna ordered him to build the new city of Dwarka, far away in the west, and when it was finished, he removed thither with all the Yadavas and Vrishnis, and took Princess Rukmini as his wife and queen.

This was the time when a bitter feud sprang up between his cousins, the Pandavas and Kauravas, as told in the *Mahabharata*. Krishna's part in the great struggle was that of a Charioteer, without weapons. How the battle was fought and won has already been related. But after the battle, while the pall of death still covered the battlefield, Gandhari, mother of Duryodhana,

cursed Krishna, and in fulfillment of her curse, many years later, the Vrishni men were seized with madness and suddenly began to slay one another. Krishna himself, sitting in the forest as a yogi, with senses fully restrained, was mistaken for a deer and shot by a simple hunter. So Krishna ascended to his own place, and Rukmini and the Vrishni ladies burned themselves in a vast mournful funeral pyre, as the waters of the ocean arose in a great flood and wiped away all trace of the fair city of Dwarka from the land. The city called Dwarka today is a new city, built long after, and is not the Dwarka where Krishna lived.

Such is the Krishna story, embroidered with fancy and legend. But the *Bhagavad-Gita* embodies the great spiritual message of Hinduism. In this, Krishna preaches the fourfold path leading to *mukti*, or freedom—the path of knowledge, duty, disciplined meditation, and devotion. Of these, he proclaims the path of singlehearted devotion to the Lord the easiest to follow.

Apart from the dominating field of religion, Indian life was rich and varied a thousand or fifteen hundred years ago, and it offered many opportunities for men of brains and ability to rise to distinction. Endless romances are spun around the illustrious name of King Vikramaditya of Ujjain and the traditional Nine Gems of Sanskrit literature, supposed to have flourished at his court. Vikramaditya is generally identified with Chandragupta Vikramaditya, third king of the Gupta line, who made Ujjain his capital at the end of the fourth century and for the early part of the fifth, until his death. The nine luminous stars so closely associated with him, however, could scarcely all have lived within the lifetime of any one man. Their activities span at least two centuries, but they are centuries which come within the period under discussion. The constellation of greatness includes Vahara-mihira the astronomer, Brahmagupta the mathematician and astronomer, Vararuchi the grammarian, Amarsinha the author of a Sanskrit dictionary, Dhanvantari the physician, Shankhu the architect, Kshapanaka the astrologer, Vaitalika the magician, and India's most famous poet and dramatist, Kalidasa.

The mere enumeration indicates the prevailing intellectual atmosphere and culture of a Gupta court.

Three of the Nine Gems were star-studiers. Astronomy had already established itself on a genuinely scientific basis in early Gupta times. The father of scientific astronomy in India was Aryabhata. He is known to have been teaching astronomy at Pataliputra in 499, when he was only twenty-three. Aryabhata was advanced enough to believe that the earth rotated on its own axis, and he was able, without the use of a telescope or any modern scientific instruments, to calculate, by epicycles and eccentric circles, the position and courses of the planets. With a just pride in his own original discoveries, he declared, "The spotless jewel of true knowledge, which lay so long sunk in the ocean of knowledge both true and false, has been raised by me therefrom, using the boat of my own intelligence."

Aryabhata was the first Indian astronomer to include a special section on pure mathematics in his work on astronomy. Geometrical calculation had been used in ancient India in the construction of the Vedic altars, but the astronomer required a knowledge of arithmetic and algebra. Aryabhata described various original ways to perform different mathematical operations, including the extraction of square and cube roots and the solving of quadratic equations. In all his calculations, he made use of decimals and the Indian inventions of zero and the place-value system. He was thus well in advance of mathematicians of any other country. After his time, all Indian mathematicians and astronomers invariably followed his example.

The special contribution of the astronomer Vahara-mihira, in the early sixth century, is his summary of five old astronomical works (*Siddhantas*). Since only one of them, the *Surya-siddhanta*, has actually been preserved, the account of the others is of considerable interest. Two of the works described by Vahara-mihira suggest a Greek origin, the *Paulisa*, thought to have been a translation of a third-century work by Paul of Alexandria, and the *Romaṇa*. The Greek system of astronomy was

certainly familiar in India by the sixth century, and the Greek names for the twelve signs of the zodiac were translated literally into Sanskrit and adopted by all Indian astronomers. Vaharamihira quotes the fine tribute paid to Greek astronomy by the early Indian astronomer Garga: "The Greeks are barbarians, but amongst them this science is duly established; therefore they are honored as *Rishis*."

The astronomer-mathematician Brahmagupta was a contemporary of Harsha. He anticipated Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation. "All things fall to the earth by a law of nature," he maintained, "for it is the nature of the earth to attract and keep things." Barely a century after his time, twenty Indian scientists were invited to Baghdad by the reigning Khalif al-Mansur. They carried with them a collection of Indian scientific books, including the *Siddhanta* of Brahmagupta, and these works were subsequently all translated into Arabic. One of them, called *Sind-Hind* in Arabic, which exercised an important influence upon Arabian astronomy in its formative period, is thought to have been a translation or adaptation of Brahmagupta's work.

Last in the line of the great early mathematical thinkers and astronomers in India was Bhaskara II, who lived in the twelfth century. He was the author of a famous scientific work in three sections, dealing with astronomy, arithmetic and algebra. The arithmetic section was named *Lilavati*, in honor of his daughter, who herself became an accomplished mathematician. The story told is that her marriage had been arranged and the auspicious time for the ceremony carefully calculated. When Lilavati was watching the water clock, unknown to herself a tiny pearl fell from her hair ornament, fatefully closing the hole in the bottom of the floating copper vessel. The auspicious moment came and passed. Were she still to be married, the stars foretold a tragic fate for her. Therefore her father decided to make her a wonderful mathematician, like himself. The eight-hundred-year-old Indian arithmetic book which bears her name gives rules and

problems such as Bhaskara might well have set his little daughter to solve. Here are typical examples:

"Out of a heap of pure lotus flowers, a third, a fifth, a sixth were offered respectively to the gods Shiva, Vishnu and Surya, and a quarter was presented to the goddess Bhavani. The remaining six were given to the venerable Preceptor. Tell quickly the number of lotuses."

"Arjuna, irritated in fight, shot a quiver of arrows to slay Karna. With half the arrows, he parted those of his antagonist; with four times the square root of the quiverful, he killed his horses; with three, he demolished the umbrella, standard and bow; and with one he cut off the head of his foe. How many were the arrows Arjuna let fly?"

"Eight rubies, ten emeralds and a hundred pearls which are in thy earring, my beloved, were purchased by me for thee at an equal amount, and the sum of the rates of the three sorts of jewels was three less than half a hundred. Tell me the rate of each, auspicious woman."

As might be expected, medicine and surgery also made advances in India during these same early centuries. Hospitals were supported by the state, by religious institutions and by wealthy citizens. Care of the sick, including animals, was looked upon as a work of special merit. Brahmin priests had long before come to possess a good knowledge of anatomy through the performance of animal sacrifices, associated with certain types of Hindu ritual. The Buddhists, who were opposed to these sacrifices, turned their attention to healing as a work of service, and medical courses formed a regular part of the curriculum at Nalanda and other Buddhist universities. The Jains, likewise, specialized in animal hospitals. The imperial armies, with their large forces of elephants and horses, offered another source of training in veterinary knowledge. Separate veterinary departments were maintained to look after the animals useful in war. The two famous medical authorities of India, Charaka and Susruta, continued to command the greatest respect. A medical

treatise of the third or fourth century A.D. from Chinese Turkestan contains extensive quotations from both authors. Even in this distant region, it appears, and all the way from Indo-China to Arabia, Charaka and Susruta were considered standard medical authorities.

Buddhist books have many references to the medical skill of Nagarjuna, often confused with his predecessor Nagarjuna the philosopher, who is credited with having rewritten the early treatise of Susruta. Yuan Chwang remarks, "Nagarjuna Bodhisattva was well practised in the art of compounding medicine." Among other things, Nagarjuna is said to have discovered the process of distillation and a method of converting mild alkali into caustic alkali for use as a disinfectant—something not known in Europe until the eleventh century. He was also the first person known to prescribe mercury as an internal medicine. In sixteenth-century Europe, when the Swiss-German doctor, who went by the name of Paracelsus, recommended preparations of mercury to be taken internally in certain cases, there was a great hue and cry against such unorthodox treatment. Metallic preparations, as against herbal, had a long struggle before they were finally accepted in the Western medical pharmacopoeia. In India, not only mercury, but iron and arsenic, were in wide use as internal medicine by the beginning of the seventh century.

I-tsing devotes a considerable amount of space to a well-known Indian physician of his time whom he neglects to name, but who may well have been Vagbhata. He produced a popular work summarizing in one volume the eight sections of the ancient Ayurvedic system of medicine. As the original *Ayur-veda* consisted of a hundred sections of a thousand stanzas each, the short summary was no doubt most welcome, and it was utilized by physicians throughout the "five parts of India," says I-tsing. The eight chapters discussed treatment of sores, facial disorders, including eye, ear and nose troubles, bodily ailments excluding the head, mental diseases, children's diseases, antidotes for poisons, various reputed means for lengthening of life, and general

rules of preventive hygiene and good health. But the sensible Indian habit of fasting as a cure for bodily disorders, before resorting to medicine, especially commended itself to I-tsing. He noted that many persons when taken ill would voluntarily abstain from food for one or two weeks, or even for a whole month, and be all the better for it. Indians still instinctively fall back on fasting, when suffering from fever or similar ailments.

In the eighth and ninth centuries, many Indian medical treatises, along with other scientific works, were translated into Arabic. The Arabs were keen observers, remarkably objective in their outlook. They studied both Greek and Indian science with open minds and borrowed from both as they thought fit. When it became obvious that the springs of original research were drying up at the source, the Arabs went on making independent investigations of their own. When they overran Spain in the eighth century, it was the composite Arabian system of medicine which was passed on to Europe. And it was probably through the Arabs that the Turks, and later the English, first became acquainted with the old Indian practice of inoculation for smallpox by inducing a mild form of cowpox, as described by an Indian doctor of Benares: "From the matter of the pustule of the cow, I keep a thread drenched. . . . I run the drenched string into a needle, and drawing it through between the skin and flesh of the child's upper arm, leave it there, performing the same operation in both arms, which always ensures an easy eruption."

Serious interest in philosophy and science, though of course not religion, must always have been confined to the few out of the total population who were educated. But poetic works in Sanskrit, especially collections of tales, were produced purely for popular consumption in India from the first centuries of the present era. The earliest of such collections were probably the Buddhist *avadanas*, or "stories of great deeds." They copied the Pali Jatakas, pointing a moral drawn from the effects of good and bad deeds, and had as their heroes saints and Bodhisattvas.

At least one such work was translated into Chinese as early as the first half of the third century A.D. About the same time, a Sanskrit Jataka book, the *Jataka-mala*, or "Garland of Jatakas," by Aryasura, gained great fame throughout the Buddhist world. It contained thirty-four "Birth-stories," some of them identical with the Pali, others quite new.

Of a somewhat different character are the story collections whose sole purpose was to amuse. The original of this type of literature seems to have been the "Great Romance" (*Brihat-katha*) by the Andhra minister Gunadhya, belonging to the first or second century A.D. This was composed not in Sanskrit, but in the Paisachi dialect. The "Great Romance" recounted the many love adventures and marriages of an imaginary hero named Naravahana-datta, a character who often reappeared in later Indian literature. For centuries, in fact, authors went on mining their materials unabashed from Gunadhya, or Sanskrit renderings of his work. The climax in story collections was reached in the eleventh century, with the appearance of two incredibly prodigious works, the "Great Cluster of Story" (*Brihat-katha-manjari*) by Kshemendra, and the "Ocean of the Rivers of Story" (*Katha-sarit-sagara*) by Somadeva, a Kashmiri Brahmin. Both swept into their vast treasury countless tales which had been passing from mouth to mouth for unknown centuries, including many which had already been given literary form in earlier collections.

Shorter Sanskrit storybooks, sometimes in prose or in mixed prose and verse, were also current. Individual stories from such works often wandered off to China, Mongolia, western Asia and even to Europe. One of the best examples is the "Seventy Stories of a Parrot" (*Suka-saptati*), author unknown, but probably of the seventh century. A certain husband who does not trust his wife too well finds himself compelled to go off on a long journey. He leaves behind a talking parrot, from whom he expects to get a truthful account of what happens in his absence, but the parrot, by the simple expedient of telling the lady a story

every evening just as she is on the point of going out in search of adventure, manages to keep her safely at home for full seventy nights, until her husband returns. The famous Arabian story-book *Thousand and One Nights' Entertainment*, which has an exactly similar framework, may very well have borrowed this idea from the "Seventy Stories of a Parrot." In somewhat similar vein, are "Twenty-five Stories of the Vampire" (*Vetala-panchavinsatīka*) and "Thirty-two Tales of the Lion Throne" (*Sinhasanad-vatrimsatīka*), both associated with the legendary King Vikramaditya of Ujjain.

Perhaps the most famous of all Indian storybooks is the *Panchatantra*, or the "Five Books." In a fine modern English translation, Arthur Ryder claimed that this work contains the most widely known stories in the world. "If it were further declared that the *Panchatantra* is the best collection of stories in the world, the assertion could hardly be disproved." As usual, there is a framing story. An imaginary king suffers from the affliction of having three sons who are all "hostile to education." In despair, he summons his counselors, who recommend a certain old Brahmin as tutor. The Brahmin takes the dullard princes home with him, promising to make them acquainted with the art of intelligent living within six months' time. He then composes the *Panchatantra*, and makes the boys learn it off by heart. Most of the characters in the stories are animals, who play the part of kings, ministers, courtiers, spies and lowly born hangers-on. Each story, as it is put into the mouth of an animal, is a witty presentation, in mixed prose and verse, of some lesson of practical wisdom. The foibles and weaknesses of vanity, treachery, greed, heedlessness, stupidity and cowardice are all shown to come home to roost. Particularly delightful is the polished speech and shrewd wisdom of the Indian animals. They talk poetry and common sense, philosophy and statecraft, with all the urbanity of court officials.

Nothing positive is known about either the author or date of the *Panchatantra*. A late Arabian statement that it was part of

a much larger work originally composed by a wise Brahmin named "Bidpai" for the specific purpose of educating Alexander's successors in India in worldly wisdom is scarcely credible. It was composed, at any rate, before the fifth century, and there is some reason to believe that it was written down in Kashmir. Certain stories repeat the Jataka stories, but in the form in which it now exists the *Panchatantra* is shorn of any special Buddhist flavor and seems rather to be a collection of ancient folk tales presented under the guise of a *nitishashtra*, an exemplar of the art of practical life. Twenty-five Indian versions exist, one of them the well-known fourteenth-century *Hitopadesa*, or "Book of Useful Counsels." Out of its total of forty-three tales, this contains twenty-five stories from the *Panchatantra*.

The *Panchatantra* was the principal inspiration, as well as the direct source, of many of the popular beast fables of medieval Europe, and its intricate migration to foreign lands, traced by modern scholars, makes a fascinating story in itself. The book was first sent as a gift, along with the Indian game of chess, to the Persian ruler Khosrau I by an unknown Indian king in the sixth century. It was translated into Persian by Khosrau's court physician Barzoi, or Barzuye. In the eighth century it passed from Persian into Syriac and Arabic. The Arabic text, which bore the title of *Kalilah wa Dimnah* — a corruption of the Indian names of two jackals who play important roles in one tale — was translated into Greek in the eleventh century and into Hebrew, Latin and Spanish in the thirteenth. The Latin version was given the curious title of "Aesop of the Old," evidently on the assumption that the tales would be more popular if attributed to the old Greek author of the sixth century B.C., credited with the creation of similar animal fables, though nothing authentically his has survived. Aesop's name proved a success, and a fourteenth-century Greek monk of Constantinople, named Planudes, next turned out a fable collection, with many stories derived from Indian sources, which he boldly called "Aesop's Fables."

Under the name of Aesop or Bidpai (also known as Pilpay), Indian stories thus made their way into medieval Europe and were translated into many different languages. The famous thirteenth-century Latin *Gesta Romanorum*, the fourteenth-century Italian *Decameron* of Boccaccio, some of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* of the same century, Sir Thomas North's English translation in the sixteenth century of an Italian collection of fables, LaFontaine's *Fables* in the seventeenth century, Grimms' *Fairy Tales* in the eighteenth and Hans Andersen's in the nineteenth—these are proved channels by which many Indian stories, including such familiar ones as "The Magic Mirror," "The Seven-league Boots," "Jack and the Beanstalk" and "The Purse of Fortunatus," were eventually carried throughout the Western World.

The remarkable travels of another literary work having its source in India produced even more astonishing results. In the eighth century, a certain Greek Christian, afterwards known as St. John of Damascus, happened to be holding an official post in Baghdad at the court of al-Mansur, the khalif during whose reign the *Panchatantra* was first translated from Persian into Arabic. John of Damascus turned his hand to authorship, producing a religious romance in Greek, which was the earliest work of its kind known in the West. The theme of his story was the conversion to Christianity by one Barlaam of an Indian prince named Josaphat, or Joasaph, and of how Josaphat, seeing the misery everywhere in the world about him, finally decided to renounce his kingdom and adopt the life of a holy hermit. This tale was translated into Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, German, English, Swedish, Dutch, and even Icelandic. Josaphat's supposed glorious conversion so fired medieval Christian imagination that the Indian prince found his way into the official Martyrologies of both the Greek Church of the East and the Roman Catholic Church of the West, and was ultimately canonized in the sixteenth century. Yet it now turns out that Josaphat was in reality no other than the Bodhisat, or Bodhi-

sattva — in other words, Gotama Buddha — who by this queer metamorphosis was changed into a Christian saint! John of Damascus had undoubtedly read some Arabic life of the Buddha, perhaps a translation of the introduction to the Jataka stories, and with no dishonest intent, but simply as a good storyteller taking his material where he found it, he proceeded to transform the well-known Buddhist story into a Christian romance. Some of the Jatakas are also woven into the story of Josaphat, for example, the story of the “Three Caskets” — afterwards borrowed by Shakespeare for use in his *Merchant of Venice*.

A very different type of Sanskrit literature also flourished under the Guptas and their successors. Religious works and folk tales were far less familiar at the royal courts than in monasteries or under village trees. A sophisticated and polished kind of Sanskrit poetry and drama, applauded or criticized by a highly sophisticated and polished audience, was what court culture demanded. Many works on poetics appeared as guides, and the poets of the period themselves took a hand in deliberately creating an ornate and artificial Sanskrit, calculated to suit the taste of the day. Many of these poets were more original in language and meter than in ideas. They went on selecting single incidents and episodes from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the Purannic legends, spinning them out in semi-new narrative poems, called *kavyas*. Sometimes the authors drew upon historical material for their themes, but usually the result was a confused tangle of history and mythology. In the main, the *kavya* poets seemed quite satisfied to derive their inspiration from the old familiar legends. The *kavya* is properly defined as a narrative poem of medium length in ornate Sanskrit by an individual poet, but sometimes the term is expanded to include certain prose works which display some of the characteristics of a *kavya*. Two such prose *kavyas* are the *Harsha-charita* and the unfinished *Kadambari* of Harsha's court poet, Bana.

One of the earliest, and certainly the greatest, of the polished

Sanskrit poets who added gold to India's golden age was Kalidasa. His fame rests solidly on seven surviving poetic works — two kavyas, two lyrics and three plays. Little or nothing is known about the birth or life of India's greatest poet. He is surmised to have been born in the Maharashtra country. He might have been living about A.D. 400. Traditionally he was one of the Nine Gems gracing the court of Vikramaditya, and he certainly knew Ujjain well. Tolerant of all religious faiths, he showed personal preference for Shiva. This is about all that can be said of Kalidasa the man. His influence upon Indian literature, however, is as great as Shakespeare's upon English literature. Thanks to courses in Sanskrit, his name has now become known in almost every civilized country in the world. His qualities belong to no one country and no single period. He is recognized for his lyric genius, his metrical skill, his lucidity, his good taste, his sensitiveness to beauty, his tenderness and his happy choice of subjects.

The two narrative poems of Kalidasa are the *Raghu-vamsa*, "Story of the Race of Raghu" — another of Rama's many names — and the *Kumara-sambhava*, "Birth of the War-god." The first retells the story of Rama in nineteen cantos of more than fifteen hundred stanzas. The second, a third shorter, has for its theme the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, the birth of their son Kumara (also known as Skanda, Karttikeya or Subramanya) and his final victory as commander of the celestial armies over the demon Taraka, whose foolish vanity led him to challenge the gods. Both poems are typical kavyas, and their pattern was assiduously followed by many lesser Indian poets in the centuries after Kalidasa.

More living from a modern point of view, no doubt, are the two lyric poems of Kalidasa, which portray the many moods of nature against a background of human emotions — love, in the *Ritu-samhara*, or "Cycle of Seasons," sorrow, in the *Meghaduta*, or "Cloud Messenger." In the first, the poet follows the emotions of two lovers round the year, to spring and the joyous fulfillment

of their love. The more famous "Cloud Messenger" presents a homesick Yaksha, given a year's banishment in southern India by Shiva for neglecting his duty and allowing Indra's elephant to enter and trample the garden of Kuvera, Shiva's treasurer, in the Himalayas. When the poem opens, the exiled Yaksha's term of banishment has still four months to run. Seeing a cloud drifting northward, he wistfully beseeches it to carry a message of consolation and hope to his young wife who waits alone in Alaka, the divine city in the Himalayas, for the return of her Yaksha husband. The northward passage of the cloud gives Kalidasa a chance to describe in exquisite poetry the varied beauties of the scenery between the Vindhya and the Himalayas, including the fascinating attractions of Ujjain.

Out of the sixth or seventh century emerges the name of another distinguished kavya poet, Bharavi. His great work is the *Kiratarjuniya*, one of the principal Sanskrit kavyas. The theme is taken from the *Mahabharata*. The Pandava hero, Arjuna, performs a great penance in the Himalayas, in order to obtain Shiva's magic weapon, but Shiva comes in the guise of a kirata, a wild hunter, and compels Arjuna to fight with him bare-handed, before giving him his bow. To the seventh century, also, belong several lyric poets such as Mayura, Magha and Bhartrihari, and to the eighth, Amaru. Nearly all adopted a favorite contemporary device of writing a hundred verses on a given theme, principally on love.

After Kalidasa, Bhartrihari ranks next as a lyric poet in Sanskrit. He was the author of three "centuries" — one on love, one on policy and one on renunciation. He was also a grammarian, whose solid works in this field were studied in the monastic schools of his day. Bhartrihari, it seems, was torn between a life of passion and the life of a Buddhist monk. He is said to have gone in and out of a monastery seven times, and on one occasion, after his return to monastic life, was so uncertain of the firmness of his intention to remain there that he had the forethought to

keep a carriage waiting for some time at the monastery door! One of his verses expresses this personal dilemma very aptly. The translation is given as follows:

“Through the enticement of the world, I returned to the laity.  
Being free from secular pleasures, again I wear the priestly cloak.  
How do these two impulses  
Play with me, as if a child?”

Bhartrihari's poetry is intensely human, and at times it has something of the flavor, distinctly rare in Indian poetry, of one of those urbane Chinese poets like Li Po, who lived just a century after him. He attained his ideal of renunciation only in fitful moments, yet kept his eyes wistfully fixed on it. Over and over again, his stanzas confess an inner struggle.

“The face is attacked with wrinkles,  
The head is long ago painted white,  
All the limbs are enfeebled:  
Desire alone ever renews its youth.”

“For food, what begging brings, and that, too, tasteless and but once  
a day.  
For bed, the earth, and for companion, only the body itself.  
For dress, a worn-out blanket made up of a hundred patches.  
And still, alas, desires do not leave me!”

One of Bhartrihari's often quoted verses bears so striking a resemblance to the lines of Jaques in *As You Like It* that it seems impossible Shakespeare had never heard of it.

“A little while a child, then a while a youthful gallant;  
A little while in need of substance, then a while in wealthy estate;  
Then, with age-worn limbs, at the end of his life's wanderings,  
Man, like a stage-player, his body garbed in wrinkles,  
Makes his exit behind the curtain of the abode of death.”

Sometimes, too, there is a vivid touch of St. Francis in the mystic feelings of this Indian poet-monk of the seventh century.

"O Mother Earth, Father Wind, Friend Fire, Kinsman Water,  
Brother Sky,  
For the last time I clasp my hands to you in salutation.  
The power of error overthrown in me by the stainless radiant  
knowledge  
Born of your comradeship, I now enter into the Supreme Spirit."

Another well-known writer of about the same time, though some put him as early as the sixth century, is Dandin. Dandin is the author of a Sanskrit prose romance in fourteen chapters, the *Dasa-kumara-charita*, or "Adventures of the Ten Princes." A certain prince, for whom nine other princes have been selected to be his companions, gets himself lost in the jungle, and the nine princes go in search of him. Dandin makes their several adventures his opportunity to give a vivid picture of low life in the India of his day. Thieves, courtesans, false ascetics and robbers all have a part to play in the romance. Dandin, however, like Bhartrihari, had more than one string to his bow. He was also the author of one of the most important early manuals on poetics.

Style soon became something to strive for in itself, and since poets, to be successful, had chiefly to please court circles, many of them began to exercise their talents in producing clever masterpieces. Bhatti, who was probably a son of Bhartrihari, wrote a poem about the slaying of Ravana by Rama, the real purpose of which was to illustrate the "less common grammatical forms and figures of rhetoric and poetry." Kaviraja turned out a poem in which the verses could be interpreted as relating in the same words simultaneously either the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*. The *Kiratarjuniya* of Bharavi has stanzas in which each line, read backwards, is the same as the following line. It also has stanzas which are the same read forwards or backwards. Dandin in his romance of the Ten Princes carries this type of cleverness to its extreme limit. The hero, whose mouth has become sore from too much kissing, is unable to close his lips, and in consequence he tells his whole story, occupying the twelfth chapter of the book, without the use of a single labial! Such exercises in

inventiveness are by no means for this reason great works of art, but they show off admirably the poetic skill and intellectual ingenuity of the Sanskrit writers of India in the early medieval period.

Poets continued for several centuries to deluge India with works of immense length. It was not until the nineteenth century that poetry finally died out as the chief medium of Indian literary expression. Since even lawbooks, grammars and mathematical works were all written in verse, the hold that poetry had on the Indian mind must have been truly extraordinary.

Sometimes one part of the country, sometimes another, was the favored breeding ground of literary men. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, poets added special luster to the name of Kashmir. One was Bilhana, who went south to the court of an illustrious Chalukyan monarch. Here he wrote a glowing account of the life of his patron, Vikramaditya VI. Another was Kalhana, who lived in the twelfth century. He produced the first real Indian history, or at any rate the earliest surviving one, the Sanskrit *Rajatarangini*, or "River of Kings." Properly speaking, it is a poetic chronicle of Kashmir. The author says he has carefully consulted old materials in the form of biographies, inscriptions and dynastic records. The history presumes to start with 1184 B.C., after an account of fifty-two mythical kings said to have lived before that date has been presented. Exact dates for events are given from A.D. 713 onward, and Kalhana closes his history with references to contemporary happenings in the middle of the twelfth century. The "River of Kings" is important not only as a history of Kashmir, but as one of the last of the great kavyas, for it is composed according to the best Sanskrit standards for this type of work.

In Bengal, too, a great writer of Sanskrit lyric poetry was soon to appear, in the last quarter of the twelfth century. This was Jayadeva. His *Gita-govinda*, as is plain from musical directions contained in it, was originally intended to be sung. In

fervent verses, the love of Krishna, or Govinda, the Divine Cowherd, and Radha, chief of the gopis, or milkmaids, is extolled. The real meaning is of course the mystic aspiration of the soul for fusion with the Divine, its suffering at separation, its joy in reunion. The *Gita-govinda* became immensely popular. Already within a century of its composition, it was known in Gujarat, on the opposite side of India, as is evident from a verse inscribed on a stone found there. It is still a favorite work in Indian devotional literature.

In the field of drama, the Indian poets were also busy, and they have left behind them something like five hundred Sanskrit plays. The beginning of Sanskrit drama is traced to the dramatic dialogues embedded in the Rig-vedic hymns and in the *Upanishads*. Religious spectacles of some kind were certainly in vogue as far back as the time of Asoka. The earliest existing Sanskrit dramas, however, are birch-bark fragments of three Buddhist plays of the second century A.D., discovered at Turfan, in central Asia. The title of one of them is *Sariputra-prakarana*, and the subject is Buddha's conversion of his two chief disciples, Sariputra and Moggallana. This bears the name of Asvaghosha as author, and it is in nine acts. Of the two other plays, one resembles an early English morality play, with virtues and abstract ideas as dramatic personages. Included among the actors is the Buddha himself.

Two classical manuals, of early Gupta times, supply a good deal of information about the contemporary Indian theater. The first is the *Bharata-natya-sastra*. According to this, dance, music and esthetics are held to be inseparable from drama, and all receive careful attention in a discussion extending over thirty-eight chapters. As usual, a divine origin is ascribed to each of the arts. The element of recitation is said to have been taken from the *Rig-veda*, chanting, or song, from the *Sama-veda*, mime, or gesture, from the *Yajur-veda* and sentiments from the *Arthava-veda*. Shiva himself contributed dance, Vishnu con-

ceived the various dramatic styles. The divine architect was Visvakarman, who built the first playhouse, and the sage Bharata produced the first play.

The *Manasara*, the earliest textbook concerned with architecture, gives minute details regarding types of theaters, and these were elaborated upon by later commentators. There were temple theaters, village theaters, open-air theaters, private theaters attached to palaces and houses of the rich. The palace theater consisted of an elevated stage and a pillared auditorium, with the king's seat in the center. Accommodation for queens and court ladies was provided at the right and left, and the council of ministers and other high officials were seated behind. The dressing rooms were screened off by a curtain at the back of the stage. A very thin front curtain, called the "mist curtain" was sometimes employed to enhance the effectiveness of dances seen through it. Little scenery was used, but a few properties like seats, thrones and chariots might be provided, and houses, hermitages, gardens or cities could be suggested by appropriate symbols.

Sanskrit plays are classified under ten types. The two most important ones are the *nataka*, which has mythology, history or political intrigue for its theme, and in which the hero is either a god or a king, and the *prakarana*, with a plot invented by the individual author, in which the characters are ordinary people. Every play opens with a *nandi*, or invocation, usually addressed to Shiva or Vishnu, but sometimes, as in Buddhist dramas like the *Nagananda* of Harsha, to Buddha. This is followed by a prologue in the form of a dialogue between the stage manager and one of the actors or actresses, in which the name of the author is introduced and enough of the plot is outlined for the audience to be able to follow the action when the play begins. It is a fixed rule of the Sanskrit stage that tragedy is never permitted. Every drama must have a happy ending. Nor are deaths allowed to take place on the stage, with the exception of a villain's death.

Sanskrit drama, unlike the drama of ancient Greece, is divided into acts, the usual number being five or seven. Two stock characters appear in most of the plays. One is called the *vidushaka*. He is a comic Brahmin dwarf, confidant of the hero, whose main interest is food, and whose jests often have pointed meaning. The other stock character is the *vita*. He is the polished companion of the hero, or sometimes of the villain, a sort of parasite who nevertheless helps to clear away obstacles besetting the path of his patron. Women's parts, surprisingly enough, were always taken by women. A peculiar feature of many of the plays, reflecting the cosmopolitan life of the times and the marked differences in education, is the number of dialects employed, apart from the basic Sanskrit. The hero, important male personages and courtesans—whose profession required culture—all talk Sanskrit. Women in general and the *vidushaka*, in spite of playing the part of a Brahmin, talk Prakrit. But there are varied sorts of Prakrit associated with different types of character. Sauraseni, the Mathura dialect, is commonly used by respectable ladies. Avanti, or Maharashtra, is the language customarily employed by rogues and gamblers. Magadhi is reserved for palace officials and policemen. Apabhramsa is resorted to by barbarians and outcasts. In one case, Paisachi is used by a charcoal burner. Evidently audiences were expected to have a smattering of all these dialects, just as modern Indian audiences, from whatever part of the country, would be capable of understanding phrases of Hindustani or English.

The three plays of Kalidasa all belong to the *nataka* type of drama. An outline of the plots will give an idea of what Indian audiences of about A.D. 400 found highly enjoyable, but stripped of poetry the account does great injustice to Kalidasa. The earliest of his plays is the "Malavika and Agnimitra" (*Malavikāgnimitra*). The scene is laid in the ancient city of Videsa, and the hero, Agnimitra, is the grandson of Pushyamitra, founder of the Sunga Dynasty some six hundred years before the time of Kalidasa. Whether there is any historical basis for the plot apart

from the use of historical names is problematical. King Agni-mitra falls in love with a portrait of one of the queen's maids in waiting, in reality a fugitive princess in disguise from Khandesh. When he sees the girl herself perform as a star pupil in a dancing contest held in the palace, he is no longer able to control his emotions and throws discretion to the winds. The queen is furious, but in the end is persuaded to relent and withdraw her opposition to Malavika as a co-wife.



Medallion with dancing figure from Candravati Temples

"Urvasi Conquered" (*Mikramurvasi*) draws its plot from a legend which goes back to a Rig-vedic hymn, the love of King Pururavas for the heavenly nymph Urvasi. In paradise, where Urvasi is taking part in a celestial drama, she mentions by slip of tongue the name of her human lover, Pururavas, thus giving herself away. Exiled to earth, with an additional punishment that on that day when the king sees his own son she herself will be compelled to leave him and return to paradise, Urvasi manages to conceal from her lover for many years the birth of their child. In due course, however, a bird is shot by an arrow, loosed by an unseen hand. When the arrow falls to earth, it is found to bear the name of Ayus, son of Pururavas and Urvasi. At the

moment when parting seems inevitable, a heavenly messenger opportunely arrives with permission for Urvashi to remain on earth with her mortal husband, until his death.

The third of Kalidasa's plays, *Sakuntala*, is the one which has given him his lasting fame. This play, translated into many foreign languages, has been staged at one time or another in most of the great cities of the world. Like the story of Urvashi, the legend of Sakuntala is drawn from ancient literature. It was one of the tales told to the Pandavas in their forest hermitage during their long period of exile. The play opens as King Dushyanta, accompanied by his hunting party, is driving through a forest in his chariot. He finds himself at the hermitage of the great sage Kanva, and suddenly catches sight of the lovely Sakuntala collecting flowers with her friends. Thinking that she is about to be stung by a bee, Sakuntala cries out in fear, and it is a case of love at first sight.

Sakuntala is really the daughter of the celestial nymph Menaka, once sent by Indra to tempt Visvamitra from his penances and austerities, lest the sage become a rival of Indra himself. Little Sakuntala, found by Kanva, is brought up in his hermitage as his forest daughter. At the time of Dushyanta's arrival, Kanva happened to be away on a pilgrimage. By one of the eight permissible Vedic marriage rites, the plighting of simple troth, Dushyanta and Sakuntala are married, but all too soon the king has to return to his affairs of state. Before he leaves, he gives Sakuntala his signet ring and asks her to prepare to follow him to the capital.

Distracted by her new-found love, Sakuntala is negligent in her duty of waiting upon the irascible old hermit Durvasas, then a guest at the hermitage. He pronounces a terrible curse. She will be forgotten by Dushyanta, whose memory can be restored only at sight of the ring. Kanva returns and hears the story of Sakuntala's marriage. Since she is now to have a child, he decides to send her to her husband. The scene in which Sakuntala bids farewell to her pet fawn and to each loved tree and vine of the

forest hermitage is one of great beauty and moving tenderness. On her way to court, alas, she loses the ring in a stream, and the king naturally fails to recognize her. Overcome with grief and shame, she withdraws, this time to seek an abode in the hermitage of Kasyapa, another holy man, in the Himalayas, and here her child Bharata is born. A fisherman, meanwhile, finds the ring and takes it to the king, whose memory suddenly returns. Far and near he seeks the dear lost Sakuntala, until at last he arrives at the Himalayan hermitage. A strange feeling overcomes him as for the first time he sees Bharata, innocently and fearlessly playing with the cubs of a lioness. Sakuntala and Dushyanta are then happily reunited, and it is Bharata who eventually becomes the progenitor of the Kurus and Pandavas, heroes of the *Mahabharata*.

In the prologue to "Malavika and Agnimitra," the assistant addresses the stage manager as follows: "Shall we neglect the work of such illustrious authors as Bhasa, Saumilla and Kavi-putra? Can the audience feel any respect for the work of a modern poet, a Kalidasa?" It is clear that under the predecessors of Kalidasa, the Sanskrit theater was already well developed. The work of these earlier dramatists was believed to have perished until the manuscripts of thirteen old Sanskrit plays turned up in the palace library in Travancore, in 1910. One of them, at least, was by Bhasa, and the others, with a possible exception, are also considered to be his. As Bhasa certainly lived before Kalidasa, his date has been roughly placed at A.D. 350. Most of the plays ascribed to Bhasa have mythological subjects, but one, *Charudatta*, has a very different theme. A slightly later dramatist, stated in the prologue to be King Sudraka, borrowed this same theme and made it into the very famous play called *Mricchakatika*, or the "Toy Cart." Since no King Sudraka is known, it is assumed that for some reason the real author of the "Toy Cart" chose to hide his identity under a fictitious attribution, a practice sometimes adopted.

The hero Charudatta is a generous but poor Brahmin of Uj-

jain. The heroine is the noblehearted courtesan Vasantasena, in love with Charudatta. The villain is a prince who, when his advances to Vasantasena are repulsed, attempts to strangle her and fasten the crime on Charudatta. Minor characters, numbering twenty-seven, include a gambler who turns Buddhist monk, a thief who steals Vasantasena's jewels left for safekeeping with Charudatta, Charudatta's faithful wife, who, to protect her husband's honor, makes good the loss of the jewels by sending Vasantasena her single last string of diamonds, and a cowherd, afterwards chosen king by the populace when the real king dies, at the end of the play.

The "Toy Cart" is an excellent story, exceedingly vivid in its portrayal of a wide variety of human types and in its picture of easygoing social life in one of India's ancient capitals many centuries ago. The scene in which the thief breaks into Charudatta's house is a delicious parody, which might seem to have been written yesterday, on the elaborate rules and regulations supposed to govern every activity, according to the craft manuals of the Gupta period. As he contemplates the mud wall of Charudatta's house, the thief indulges in a long soliloquy on just what sort of hole he, as a well-trained student in the science of robbery, ought to make. Should it be of that distinctive shape called "Lotus," or "Cistern," or "Crescent Moon," or possibly a "Bulging Pot"?

Another well-known Sanskrit drama is the *Mudra-Rakshasa*, or "Seal of Rakshasa," by Visakhadatta, believed to have lived a century or two after Kalidasa. It has a semi-historical plot, and it is interesting that the author shows his sympathy for the side generally held unpopular by other writers. Chandragupta Maurya, with the help of his unscrupulous minister Chanakya, has succeeded in doing away with the last Nanda king and has taken possession of Pataliputra, the capital. But his real rival is Rakshasa, the faithful minister of Nanda, who aspires to see the latter's son reinstated in power. The game is cleverly played out between Chanakya and Rakshasa, each of whom makes use of

a varied assortment of spies and counterspies, in the guise of snake charmers, ascetics and minstrels. Chanakya himself is shown not to be above forging an incriminating letter. The end comes as a surprise. Rakshasa is won over to Chandragupta's cause, but Chanakya unexpectedly withdraws and leaves Rakshasa in the position of hereditary minister to his master.

Besides Harsha, whose three plays have already been mentioned, one more outstanding Sanskrit dramatist appeared in the eighth century — Bhavabhuti. He is held by many to be second in dramatic genius only to Kalidasa.

Not nature's smiling face, but her terrible one, appealed to this playwright. Bhavabhuti excels in descriptive poetry of a grand and somber style. Perhaps times had changed, and life was now becoming insecure and violent. Harsha was dead, and the struggle for political power was in full swing in northern India. Or Bhavabhuti by temperament may have preferred gloomy realities to happy dreams. The best of his three plays is the *Malati-Madhava*. This pursues the checkered and tortuous fortune in love of the hero and heroine whose names, in reverse order, appear in the title. When Malati, against her will, is about to be married off to an old courtier, the couple elope, with the connivance of a Buddhist nun! Many adventures beset their path. The melodramatic climax comes when Madhava enters a temple of the goddess Chamunda, or Kali, with the intention of committing suicide, and there finds Malati tied down and on the point of being sacrificed to the terrible goddess in some dread Tantric rite. But Sanskrit drama, it will be remembered, can never turn into tragedy. Malati is rescued, and all ends well.

Though the courtly circles and the public obviously enjoyed the theater in the days of Kalidasa, Harsha and Bhavabhuti, actors do not appear to have held any very honorable place in the contemporary Indian society. Dancers and musicians, however, received more honor, since dancing and music were practised by noble persons. A hall of dance and music was a regular feature of every Indian palace. As the literature constantly shows,

princesses not only studied dancing but were ready to give competitive demonstrations of their skill. In the *Mahabharata*, Arjuna, disguised as a dancing master, becomes the teacher of such a princess. This art of classical dancing was, of course, quite different from the folk dances of the people, and the *Bharata-natya-shastra* gives an excellent idea of the complexity and high quality of dancing in Gupta times. The dancer had to learn to express in dance movement the nine traditional dramatic moods — passion, heroic sentiment, tenderness, amazement, laughter, fear, hatred, anger and peace. The Sanskrit treatise catalogues minutely thirteen specific poses of the head, nine of the neck, nine separate movements of the eyeballs, nine of the eyelids, seven of the eyebrows, six of the chin, and so on. There were numerous hand poses, or *mudras*, constituting a supremely beautiful gesture language. By symbolic gesture alone, almost any given idea could be expressed — a flower, a bee, a deer drinking, an elephant majestically pacing the forest, a peacock dancing, rain. There were individual hand gestures for different colors, and for indicating each separate Hindu god. Mythological stories could thus be beautifully interpreted in dance pantomime. The slender and pliable Indian body naturally lent itself to this form of expression.

Old legends told how heavenly nymphs, or *apsarases*, delighted the very gods in their heaven with graceful dances. Then why not earthly nymphs to charm the silent images within the temples, as well as kings on their thrones, and sculptured nymphs for decoration on pillars and walls? In the great temples which arose all over India, after Gupta times, the hall of dance for the devadasis and sculptured friezes of little dancers and musicians were conventional features. The sculptors faithfully copied the living models, and the dancers, in turn, studied the poses of the sculptors. In the heart of Chidambaram, dedicated to Shiva as Nataraja, Lord of Dance, the temple dance hall dates from the sixth century. It has fifty-six stone pillars supporting a low roof, and each pillar is exquisitely carved with little

dancing figures. The great gateway, too, of later execution, has 108 medallions, or plaques, showing Shiva and Parvati in innumerable dance poses. Similar smiling figures in classical dance posture are to be seen on ruined temples from one end of India to the other.

Fifteen hundred years ago, India was saturated with a unique love of dance. Later on, under the frowning influence of Islam, dancing fell upon evil days. But some of the old traditions have survived in Malabar and a few other places. Troupes of trained Malabari dancers, in elaborate costumes and faces painted in the semblance of masks, still give all-night outdoor performances of pantomime dance dramas based on mythology. Their style of performance is called *kathakali*. Around Madras, the traditional style of dance is the *bharata natya*, performed indoors by girls and women. It, too, uses Hindu mythology and religion for its inspiration, and in technique closely follows the classic treatises on dance. In northern India, the Manipuri type of dancing, characteristic of Assam, uses themes associated with Krishna worship, and preserves some of the ancient atmosphere.

If Hindu gods could have their celestial dancers, they also had their celestial musicians, the *kinnaras*, and they themselves were master musicians. Sarasvati, Brahma's consort, with a vina in her hands, was the goddess of music as well as of learning. Krishna played his enchanting flute. Shiva had his little hand-drum, beating the rhythm himself in his great dance of destruction, the Tandava. Vishnu carried a conch shell. Legendary sages, too, such as Narada and Bharata, were fine musicians.

Both literature and art bear witness to the antiquity of music in India. The sacred hymns have many references to musical instruments. Early Buddhist sculptures of Sanchi and Amaravati show exactly what many of these most ancient musical instruments were like. There were drums and bells and cymbals, wind instruments and stringed instruments, of many varieties. In India, *sangita*, music, was viewed not only as an art but as a science from very early times. It is true that the most important musical

treatise of India, the *Sangita-ratnakara*, by Sarngadeva, which treats of sounds and notes, melodies, vocal and instrumental music, time, composition, dancing and acting, is comparatively late in date. It belongs only to the thirteenth century. But it is clear that Sarngadeva was not inventing a new art. He was merely discussing a very old one, and most of what he said concerning the theory of music was already long familiar in practice. The *Bharata-natya-shastra* had discussed the basic principles of the Indian system of music a thousand years before.

The *Sama-veda*, the chanted Veda, is the oldest combination of words definitely intended to be sung in existence, and classical Indian music had its origin in the Vedic chants. The starting point was a voice scale of five notes in descending order. When voice was later combined with instruments, it was found more effective to turn the scale around and make it an ascending one, and two more notes were added to produce a full octave. The seven notes were given individual names in Sanskrit, and are still known in India by the first syllables of those names, Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha and Ni. Each note was fancifully thought to correspond to the basic call note of some particular animal or bird. Beginning with Sa, the corresponding animals and birds, according to different versions, were the peacock, cow or bull, goat, heron, cuckoo, horse or frog, and elephant. The seven notes are also symbolically associated with seven deities, seven planets and seven colors.

From at least the time of the *Upanishads*, musical sounds smaller than a semitone in interval, called *srutis*, were also employed in association with the main notes. Other musical systems have also found a place for such smaller intervals. The Greeks subdivided their octave into twelve half tones and then theoretically divided these again into twenty-four quarter tones. The Arabs, by omitting the less common intervals, reduced the number to seventeen. In India the octave is divided into twenty-two *srutis*, which are not equivalent to quarter tones since the intervals are not exactly equal. They represent the smallest intervals

of sound the ear can normally detect, and correspond roughly to sharps, double sharps, naturals, flats and double flats. The *srutis*, too, have names and are grouped according to the emotional responses they are thought to evoke, but the *Bharata-natya-shastra* also defines them in mechanical terms of the length of wire required to produce the correct number of vibrations, the string of thirty-six inches producing tonic Sa on the vina being the accepted standard.

Originally India seems to have had three basic scales, which had as their respective keynotes Ma, Ga and Sa, equal to F, E and C in modern European music. The scales of Ma and Ga, however, disappeared, leaving only one basic scale, that of Sa, or C, but by using the successive notes of the octave as keynotes, a series of secondary scales were built up. The special character of Indian music, however, depends on something quite different, the *raga* melodies.

While European music from the fifteenth century developed along the line of harmony, or chords, Indian music has all along remained strictly melodic. All the notes are played or sung successively, but just as words pronounced one after the other make sense when added together, the musical notes, when added together, produce delicate melodic patterns which appeal to Indian ears far more than harmony. Westerners often find Indian music thin and monotonous. Indians, on the other hand, feel that Western music is hopelessly cluttered with chords. Western music, by its volume, produces a headache, instead of a sense of richness, and an orchestra, to any Indian who has not been trained to follow its intricate progression, is a positive nightmare. Indian music never changes its key from the beginning to the end of a given composition, and the constant modulation permitted in Western music strikes the Indian as offensive, an unforgivable jumbling of the essential melody he wants to hear.

Melody, however, to have meaning, requires something more than just an aimless if pleasing sequence of notes, and the Indian

answer was the creation of a very large number of ragas, or musical modes, regulated by pitch, speed and beat. Time, once chosen, is absolutely fixed. There are perhaps 120 different time measures to choose from, but for practical purposes only about thirty are in ordinary use today. These time measures are derived from the complicated poetic meters employed in the Vedas, and they are extremely intricate and varied. The *tabla*, or pair of drums, played with both hands, is the favorite Indian instrument for defining the musical rhythm.

In the south-Indian system of classification, there are seventy-two primary ragas, out of which some 800 secondary ragas have been evolved. In northern India, there is no single system of classification, but six primary, or basic, ragas are usually recognized, each having five derivatives, the *raginis*, or female ragas, and several "children," making a total of 132 ragas in all. Mixed ragas have also come into existence, but it is impossible to estimate their number.

Each raga follows strict rules of composition. It must be based on a particular scale, the tonic of which is constantly played or sung. It has two favorite notes of its own, described as its soul, and certain characteristic groups of notes, or melodic figures. Particular notes and srutis are invariably used or invariably omitted, but the order in which notes are struck or sung may — and often does — vary in the ascent and descent.

The ragas have been assigned distinctive moods, such as contemplation, worship, love, asceticism, mystery, tranquillity, joy or sadness. Each one has a name, and is supposed to be executed only during a particular season of the year, and certain hours of the day or night. There are early morning ragas, noon ragas, night ragas, spring ragas, rainy-season ragas! To play a raga at the wrong time or season is a lapse in musical good taste, though careless musicians nowadays ignore conventions and play or sing as they please.

All the elaborate raga symbolism in time produced a unique school of raga paintings in India. These came into vogue as a

late offshoot of what is called the Rajput school of painting. A group or single figure in an appropriate setting interprets everything suggestive of the raga melody — poetry, color, time of day, season, mood. This Indian “musical picture,” or *ragmala*, has never had any real counterpart in the art of any other country.

In an age of luxury, when beautiful things were appreciated and wanted to an extraordinary degree, the sixty-four *silpas*, or mechanical arts, of India, as might be expected, received every possible encouragement. Indian craftsmen, with the simplest of tools, produced not only magnificent stone buildings but exquisite textiles, lovely jewelry, carved ivories and woodwork, metal utensils and a thousand other things. Skilled craftsmen held an honored place in a society whose aristocratic rulers were cultured, rich and indulgent. The rulers were immensely proud of the achievements of these simple Indian workmen, and many thousands were kept constantly employed on state works and in the production of all those articles of luxury which were avidly sought after. Children performed simple tasks under the watchful eyes of their elders and a little later apprentices were taught the secrets of the particular craft, under the ancient system of guilds, which provided the necessary technical training for all workers. Guilds were far more permanent than dynasties, and their strong organization preserved the hereditary traditions of the artisan classes in India century after century. Though the craftsmen and artisans came from the lower ranks of Indian society, a wise saying had declared, “The hand of the workman engaged in his work is always pure.” The masons and carpenters and metalworkers and stoneworkers received not only excellent technical training but cultural training as well. They certainly acquired a thorough knowledge of religious symbolism, and were familiar with the epics and puranas and also with Buddhist and Jain lore.

The *silpas* themselves were codified and reduced to writing in early Gupta times. As any given work progressed, the master workman frequently read aloud or recited from memory pas-

sages from the appropriate manual. The *Manasara*, for example, the traditional textbook on architecture, sets forth in its fifty-eight chapters all the rules of construction for every conceivable type of building, including temples, arches, palaces, theaters, houses and irrigation canals, and gives exact measurements, proportions and correct orientation. By means of the *silpa-sastras*, Indian artisans received a theoretical as well as a practical education, at one and the same time. As soon as one big enterprise, such as a temple, was finished, another was begun somewhere else. Families of craftsmen moved about from one part of the country to another, or settled down for a whole lifetime to complete a single gigantic project. It was no doubt due in a large measure to the skill and intelligence of Gupta craftsmen and workmen that Gupta culture spread so rapidly beyond the Ganges Valley to all parts of India, and even to foreign lands.

From the large number of copperplate grants which have survived from the Gupta period, it is evident that temple-building was far more extensive than the few existing remains from this period would indicate. For the first time, temples were now built of separate dressed stones, though brick also continued in use. Gupta temples still standing are small. They are somewhat experimental in plan, but show characteristic features which were to develop into the typical Hindu temple of later times. The most important part of the temple was the windowless cell in which the image of the deity was placed. This was at first covered with a flat roof, but soon the flat roof gave way to a tall rounded tower, the typical temple tower now seen all over northern India and Nepal. The front of the temple, which usually faced east, consisted of a porch with heavy, short columns, and on either side of the carved door frame were sculptured figures of the river goddesses Ganga and Jumna.

Perhaps the finest of the Gupta temples is the little stone one at Deogarh, in the United Provinces. It has an exquisitely carved doorway and three large recessed panels in the outer walls. One of these depicts a splendid four-armed Shiva in the posture of a

yogi. Another shows Vishnu sleeping on the Serpent of Eternity. At Bhitagaon, in the Cawnpore district of the United Provinces, is a brick temple of the fifth century. It consists of a towerlike structure seventy feet high, with a plain interior cell only fifteen feet square. This temple bears a distinct resemblance to the well-known Buddhist temple of Bodh-Gaya, a late restoration of the fourth-century temple built in the time of Samudragupta.

Hindu cave temples, too, copied from Buddhist ones, were hollowed out of suitable cliffs in many parts of India from the Gupta age onwards. They were mysterious and secluded, especially propitious for Hindu forms of worship, which were always individual and private in essence, rather than communal. Nine Brahmanical caves at Udaigiri, in Bhopal State, are the earliest Hindu excavations of this type. One of them bears a Gupta inscription of the fourth century. Others in the Deccan and western and southern India have already been described in an earlier chapter.

The cult of image worship, both Buddhist and Hindu, was now rapidly developing, and sculpture began to assume the first place among the arts in India. New types of Hindu gods and goddesses were created — the many-armed figures inseparable from the very thought of Hindu art today. They are extraordinary symbols of power. But side by side with the new Hindu sculpture, Buddhist sculpture was produced in vast quantity in the Gupta workshops. The majority of Gupta sculptures, indeed, appears to have been Buddhist.

But what a wonderful transformation from the heavy Gandhara sculptures or the lifeless red-sandstone images of Mathura, belonging to the first century! Benares in the fifth century gave to the world ethereal and highly intellectual slender Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, all of gray stone. Gone are the clumsy robes swathing the figures as if to protect them from perpetual cold. The princely figures of Gupta art, usually slightly smaller than life-size, wear beautiful draperies which cling softly to the body, like wet muslin. These are the true garments of India, appropri-

ate to a hot climate. The girdle which holds the lower garment in place is traced beneath the upper one. Soon the sculptors freed themselves of even such externals. The body was carved as if all but nude. Only a few folds now, like a necklace, around the throat, the faint outline, still, of the girdle, a bare suggestion of the edge of garments falling across the wrists and ending just above the feet! With consummate artistry, the presence of the monastic robes was delicately indicated.

Gupta ideals did not permit the delineation of anatomy with any realistic detail. Joints and bones were not to be shown. The limbs must be softly rounded, eternally youthful. The face must be placidly smooth. Attention must be concentrated on the spiritual message conveyed by the exquisite gestures of beautiful hands — giving, blessing, teaching, reassuring, renouncing (as symbolized by the outstretched begging-bowl, asking only enough to sustain life at its barest). Above all, it was to be concentrated on the meaning of the half-shut eyes, the thought bent inward. This was the lesson of quiet and deep meditation.

Many Indian conventions came into existence at this time. The standing figure assumed the swaying posture known as the “triple-bending” pose, in which the weight was borne mainly on one leg. A large ornamental halo, with little flying figures, made its appearance behind the Buddha’s head. Since the images were intended for niches or shrines, and were to be viewed from the front only, they were often carved in one single piece with the plaque which formed the background.

Gupta sculpture had achieved great finish. It was imbued with beauty, grace, restrained elegance, dignity, tranquillity, intellectuality, spirituality — ideals which deeply influenced the whole of subsequent Indian plastic art. Under the Buddhist Pala and Hindu Sena dynasties of Bengal, from the middle of the eighth to the end of the twelfth centuries, the local schools of sculpture faithfully continued to keep alive Gupta traditions. Many beautiful works of art were produced, but gradually the refinement and spiritual quality typical of the best Gupta and

early Pala work began to fade out. But one legacy remained. India had attained cultural unity. In the eighth century, there are slim-waisted Shivas and Vishnus with high jeweled crowns so like the princely Bodhisattvas of Buddhist art that it is difficult to tell them apart.

The art of metal casting also reached a high technical and artistic level. Very large masses of metal were handled by Indian metalworkers of the fourth century. One fine example of a copper Buddha, originally from Sultanganj and now at the Birmingham Museum in England, is seven and a half feet high and weighs more than a ton. Quantities of small, well-finished bronze and copper images or votive stupas were also made. So many of these have turned up among the ruins of Nalanda that it has been suggested that Nalanda itself probably had a foundry attached to the monastery, where regular training in casting was given by experts, so that the huge demand for Buddhist images both in India and abroad might be effectively met.

Painting was still another of the arts to come of age in the Gupta period. Like music and dancing, it was an aristocratic art. Early Sanskrit literature has many references to portrait painters. Chitralekha, a woman, is the first to be mentioned by name. In the story as told in the *Mahabharata*, she was a maid in waiting to Princess Usha, who fell in love with a dream hero. Chitralekha executed from memory portraits of all the chief kings and princes of the day, until at last her mistress recognized the portrait of Aniruddha, grandson of Krishna, as the lover of her heart. Palaces in olden times had their picture galleries, and religious frescoes decorated the first monasteries. In the third century A.D., possibly even earlier, theoretical texts on painting already existed. Vatsyayana is the traditional author of the "Six Canons of Pictorial Art." These dealt with form, perspective, realistic representation, emotional quality, beauty and technique, including the application of color.

As a result of climate and the fragile nature of the usual fresco

medium — a thin coat of fine plaster laid on top of a rough coat of mud and straw — no early frescoes have remained undamaged in India, but those of Ajanta are the earliest surviving paintings in the whole of Asia, apart from prehistoric art. When Ajanta was first rediscovered, at least sixteen out of the twenty-nine rock-cut chambers were found to be decorated with paintings. Already, the greater part of the painted work has disappeared, but the series of frescoes which still remain in four of the principal halls are among the masterpieces of the world.

From the second century B.C. to the seventh century A.D. — a period of nearly a thousand years — the territory in which Ajanta lay was successfully ruled by three great southern dynasties. First it was under the Andhras. Then it passed to the Vakatakas. At the close of the fourth century, a daughter of Chandragupta Vikramaditya married a Vakataka king, and through this connection Gupta cultural influences first penetrated into the Deccan and then passed on south. In the sixth century, the Vakatakas were absorbed by the rising Chalukyan power. The greatest Chalukyan king was Pulakesin II, Harsha's contemporary of the seventh century.

On the basis of inscriptions and style, traces of the decorative work in the early Hinayana caves at Ajanta are ascribed to the first century A.D. Next in order come the magnificent frescoes in two large Mahayana halls (numbered 16 and 17 in the catalogues). They date from about the year 500, and certainly belong to the Gupta-Vakataka period. The latest frescoes (caves 1 and 2) belong to the early seventh century. Very soon after they were finished, the tide of war swirled close to Ajanta. Pulakesin was killed. The Chalukyan armies were defeated by the Pallavas from the other side of India. Ajanta was abandoned.

The great artists who labored in the cool dark halls of Ajanta were able to fix on the rocky walls all the animated contemporary world from which the yellow-robed monks had run away. The subject matter of the paintings, to be sure, was the familiar story of Buddha's life, the noble examples of his self-sacrifice, as

told in the Jatakas. There were, too, mysterious and deeply moving Bodhisattvas of the Mahayana heaven, gazing down in sweet compassion upon their devotees. Whoever knows the great sad "Bodhisattva of the Blue Lotus," on the back wall of the Vihara Number One, will remember it forever. But like the old sculptors of Sanchi, the painters of Ajanta clothed the Buddhist ideas of renunciation in trappings of the vivid pulsing world. At first sight — but only at first sight — the art of Ajanta seems oddly secular.

The crowded scenes merge irregularly into one another, alive with intense blues and many shades of green, with soft reds, with ochre and brown, cream and gray, black and white. Kings and queens with their retinues are shown within their lovely palaces. Shaven-headed Buddhist monks in yellow robes and Brahmin ascetics in white with twisted topknots, misshapen dwarfs, mothers and children, watchful attendants waiting upon their lords and ladies, bearded foreigners in fur caps and close-fitting tunics come on unknown missions from the cold north, cluster on the Ajanta walls. Noble processions of elephants tread their way out of city gates. Vijaya Sinha goes ashore in Ceylon. Canopied pleasure-boats rock on lotus lakes, seagoing masted vessels carry Indian merchandise to distant ports. Animal life is everywhere. Monkeys scamper over terraced roofs, peacocks preen themselves or drag their silken trains. Birds and deer and elephants disport in flowery jungles. A snake charmer charms his cobra. Here and there, decorative friezes and panels show cockfights and bullfights. But all the antique pageantry had but one message for the Buddhist brotherhood of Ajanta, fifteen hundred years ago. It was the lesson book of unselfishness, taught by the Master, the renunciation of what is, for the dream of a perfection that may be.

For others, living in an alien present, the Ajanta frescoes are more a priceless record of the past than anything else. One sees how people lived in one of India's great epochs. Domestic architecture, one observes, was still of wood and plaster, elegant but

fragile. Every house had its little latticed balconies. Slender pillars of red lacquer rose like forests. Low stools and thrones were the most conspicuous among articles of furniture. The earthenware jars were exactly the same shape as those of today. The mixed population, its differences as noticeable then as now, is represented with a striking variety of complexions, ranging from old ivory, the color of gods and noble persons, through the reddish brown of ordinary folk to the blue-black of the primitive types. Aristocrats are distinguished by "lotus" eyes, the lids drawn into an enchanting curve and point at the outer corner as delicate in outline as a lotus petal, from which they take their description. Particularly characteristic of the Ajanta school of painting is the striking fullness of the lower lip, which suggests softness and tenderness. As for gestures, the Ajanta hands display all the wonderful grace and expressiveness which beauty-loving India associated with every form of her art.

The ancient passion for jewelry reaches a climax at Ajanta. Bodhisattvas, men and women, all wear earrings, necklaces, armlets, tiaras. The women also adorn themselves with jeweled girdles, bracelets and anklets. In the stillness of the sculptured caverns, one can almost hear them tinkling softly! Hair styles are amazingly elaborate, and flowers and chains of pearls were evidently in high favor. By contrast, there is an easy grace and naturalness in the way clothes are worn. These are reduced to a minimum. The commonest garment is a short knee-length *dhoti*, a straight piece of cloth, wrapped like a skirt around the lower part of the body and twisted into a knot at the waist. The torso wears only jewelry, and perhaps a thin scarf. But some figures have long dhotis, or knee-length drawers. Sometimes the women display diaphanous bodices or little short-sleeved jackets. Design and color vary endlessly. Broad contrasting stripes and delicate combinations of lines alternate with charming floral patterns. The skill of the ancient weavers and dyers is triumphantly revealed in the Ajanta frescoes.

Other examples of early painting in India are all too few.

Ceiling paintings survive in a temple at Sirguja, in Orissa. Traces of frescoes are found in a sixth-century Brahmanical cave temple at Vatapi, the onetime capital of the Chalukyas in the Deccan, now Badami, in the province of Bombay. The Kailasa temple at Elura, of the eighth century, has a painted ceiling. But next to Ajanta in importance, and obviously of the same splendid tradition of painting, are remnants of frescoes in the Mahayanist caves at Bagh, in Gwalior, dating from the fifth to the seventh centuries. The portico of one of these cave temples has an exciting fresco, which has now all but disappeared. The subject has not been satisfactorily identified, but royal personages, soldiers, horsemen, elephant riders, bewigged dancers, actors and musicians perhaps indicate some sort of dramatic entertainment.

Not strictly Indian, but showing close affinities with Ajanta, is a notable fifth-century fresco at Sigiriya, in Ceylon. Kasyapa I murdered the king his father and then attempted to escape his brother's vengeance by building himself an impregnable rock fortress at Sigiriya. Here he apparently amused himself by having shallow chambers cut out from the vertical face at the very top of the rock above the fortress. Along the inner wall of one, float twenty chaste and lovely ladies, all proceeding in the same direction, with offerings of flowers or fruits in their hands. There was a time when the wasp-waisted ladies of Sigiriya were called "Kasyapa's Queens," but their lower limbs are swathed in clouds, and discerning critics of today see them as a beautiful procession of heavenly beings.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Indian Culture Beyond the Seas*

FOR WELL OVER a thousand years, from the centuries immediately preceding those of the present era up to the twelfth or thirteenth century, India radiated to adjacent islands and neighbor countries the civilizing influences of her material greatness and the highly developed life of mind and spirit she had achieved for herself. Rarely, during this long period, did she act the part of an aggressor. Merchants, sailors and missionaries, but seldom soldiers, set out from the shores of India. They carried with them the varied produce of the Indian soil and the much-prized articles of Indian craftsmanship. Some preached an illuminating message of peace and spiritual values more lasting than worldly blessings. Sometimes, too, petty Indian kings fled abroad for refuge, after suffering defeat at the hands of some powerful rival. Gathering supporters around them, in time they founded new dynasties in the lands of their adoption.

The Indian colonies which began to grow up all along the periphery of the motherland were essentially cultural and religious, rather than political or racial. They owed allegiance to no Indian emperor, were obedient to no Indian imperial policy. Yet they were subject to strong Indian influences. These swept outward like tidal waves. They passed south to Ceylon and beyond to the remote islands of the Pacific. They inundated Burma, Malaya, Siam and Indo-China. They overwhelmed Nepal and Tibet. From Afghanistan, they passed along to central Asia and China. They lapped at the far shores of Korea and Japan. Indian religious ideas and literature, Indian conventions of art and architecture, Indian legal codes and social practices,



even, upon occasion, the peculiarly Indian invention of caste, all took root in these outer territories.

India held a strange and irresistible attraction for the whole of Asia in the first millennium. People in the most primitive stage of development as well as the Chinese, with a civilization as ancient and illustrious as India's own, acknowledged India as first in the supreme realm of spiritual perception. Yet the civilization of India, transplanted abroad, did not have a deadening effect of suppressing or stifling native genius, as the imposition of a foreign culture often does. On the contrary, it called out the best that others had to give. As a result of India's fertilizing influence, new and distinctive types of culture everywhere arose, and each new colony was able to create and contribute fresh treasure, to be added to the great Asiatic heritage. How Indian religions and Indian culture blossomed anew in foreign environments and endured for many centuries is a fascinating and little appreciated chapter of Indian history.

For a long time Indians seem to have held the monopoly of

maritime commerce in both the southern and eastern seas of Asia. They possessed large ocean-going vessels, in which they first ventured to Ceylon, Burma and Malaya. Gradually they extended their journeys to Java and Sumatra, and then to southern China. Not until the second and third centuries A.D. did Persian and Arab mariners appear on the scene, and not until the seventh century did China take an active part in maritime trade with southern Asia. Tamralipti, at the mouth of the Ganges in Bengal, Palura, on the coast of ancient Kalinga, and the Ganges river ports of Benares and Champa (Bhagalpur), were the oldest Indian sailing ports for the East. In the seventh century, Mamallapuram, near Madras, was a popular point of embarkation and the chief one for southern India.

Many of the Indian settlements planted at favorable points along the trade routes developed into independent kingdoms in the course of time. Their history has had to be reconstructed from scattered materials such as inscriptions, architectural and sculptural remains, manuscripts and ruined cities once patterned after the ancient royal towns of India — materials lost for hundreds of years in the tropical forests of southeastern Asia, or buried under the drifting sands of the central Asian deserts, or hidden away beyond reach in the inaccessible mountain fastnesses of Nepal and Tibet. To be able to achieve this reconstruction, modern scholars have had to ransack endless documents, pursuing clues and disentangling evidence, bit by bit, from Sanskrit, Pali, Tamil, Chinese, Arabic, Javanese, Malay, Burmese, Siamese, Nepalese and Tibetan sources. They have had to penetrate the mysteries of such unfamiliar or dead languages as Mon, Pyu, Khmer, Kuchan, Khotanese and Sogdian. To add to the difficulties, the ancient cities and kingdoms were known by different names at different times to different peoples, and names were often transferred with disconcerting casualness from one place to another. No wonder the thrilling story of the great outward movement of Indian civilization has only just begun to make itself vaguely known!

The island of Ceylon was the first of all the outer lands to open its heart to India. Ceylon was an obvious center of maritime commerce from earliest times on account of its position, and it became a natural steppingstone between India and both East and West. Indian merchants and princes were followed by those who sought to give, not to take — the Buddhist monks, who won the esteem and affection of the island people through sheer goodness. Taught by such noble men, Ceylon adopted Buddhism in the third century B.C., and for fifteen hundred years Buddhism continued to mould the life and culture of the Sinhalese people. Even the Portuguese when they established themselves in the island at the beginning of the sixteenth century were unable to displace this Buddhist culture of Ceylon.

Indian and Sinhalese sources both agree that Indians who first settled in Ceylon were not Tamils, as might be expected, but Aryans from the north. Proof lies in the fact that the Sinhalese language belongs to the Aryan family and not to the Dravidian. The ancient Sanskrit epic of the *Ramayana*, though scarcely history, has fixed in the minds of countless millions of Indians and Sinhalese the story of how Rama, Aryan prince of Ayodhya, in northern India, made his way south to Lanka, as Ceylon is called in the Sanskrit text, and with his army of monkeys and bears killed Ravana, the island king, in punishment for his abduction of Sita. When the *Ramayana* was composed in India, an Aryan invasion of Ceylon was at least a literary possibility. Though the *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*, the two great Pali Buddhist chronicles of Ceylon belonging to the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. (but supposedly derived from an earlier lost original, in Old-Sinhalese) ignore the story of Rama and Ravana, they also treat the island history as commencing with the arrival of a north-Indian prince, Vijayasinha, of Bengal.

This exiled prince, following the sea route of the traders, is said to have landed in Ceylon with seven hundred followers in the fifth century B.C., on that very day and at that very hour when Gotama Buddha, far away in the north, entered into

Nirvana. Subduing the primitive Veddahs, then the sole inhabitants of the island, Vijayasinha made himself king and named the newly conquered country Sihala, or Sinhala — whence Ceylon — to commemorate the old myth that his grandfather was a lion. He then sent suitable presents to Madura on the Indian mainland, thus obtaining the hand of a Pandian princess who brought over with her, according to the account, seven hundred maidens to become the wives of Vijaya's seven hundred followers and a thousand families representing the eighteen guilds of Indian craftsmen.

The Sinhalese people, emerging from the union of Aryan and Dravidian, no doubt with an admixture of primitive elements, quickly became the dominant stock in the island. Rice cultivation was introduced from India, and all the typical Indian arts and crafts began to be practised, such as music, drama, dancing, metalwork, building and sculpture. Within fifty years of Vijaya's landing, immense masonry reservoirs were being constructed. Great buildings followed. But the zeal with which the Sinhalese and Indian monks transcribed and translated the early Buddhist teachings received from India, along with a knowledge of letters, was to place the whole world in their debt. The language and script in which these earliest Buddhist works are preserved in Ceylon is Pali, and the language is presumably that spoken in Magadha, in the Buddha's day, or at least in the time of Asoka. In the fifth century A.D., it was to Ceylon that learned Indian Buddhists had to go to study the Buddhist Canon in its purest surviving form, and the commentaries they wrote were based on the palm-leaf manuscripts found in the monastic libraries of ancient Ceylon. The type of Buddhism accepted by Ceylon was the orthodox Buddhism of Asoka's time, which taught the ideal of self-perfection for the individual, to be won by means of good works and meditation strenuously practised through many lives.

The Pali Buddhist chronicles of Ceylon have preserved the detailed story of how Buddhism was first carried to the island

of Ceylon. When Devampiya Tissa succeeded to the Sinhalese throne at Anuradhapura, in the northern part of the island, about the middle of the third century B.C., he sent courtesy gifts to his contemporary, the great Asoka of India, whose sphere of influence had by then expanded to include the Tamil country across the straits. Asoka sent return gifts and exhorted Tissa to seek the incomparable treasure of the religion of the Buddha. When the Sinhalese king asked for further enlightenment, Asoka dispatched members of his own family as the first Buddhist missionaries to Ceylon. The chief of the little mission was his own son Mahendra, or Mahinda, who had taken his monk's vows twelve years before. Mahendra was accompanied by four other monks and Asoka's young grandson, Sumana, and a little later Asoka's daughter, the nun Sanghamitra, followed her brother to Ceylon to initiate the royal ladies in the Buddhist faith. Tissa and all his people accepted Buddhism with eager hearts. Precious relics arrived from Asoka as a reward for this conversion, and Tissa and the long line of Sinhalese kings who came after him emptied the royal treasury again and again in a burning desire to build stupas and monasteries more magnificent even than those of India. The ruins of many of them still survive in the vicinity of the early Sinhalese capitals.

Utmost reverence has always been paid by the Sinhalese to the sacred relics and traditional places associated with the first Buddhist missions from India. These are inextricably intertwined with the legend, art and history of the island. Most precious among the treasures was the rooted southern branch of the Bodhi tree under which Gotama Buddha attained enlightenment. It was said to have been cut off by Asoka himself and was brought to Ceylon by sea in a golden vase carried by Sanghamitra. Tissa went to receive it at the port and personally accompanied it on the fourteen days' journey to Anuradhapura. There it was planted with solemn ceremony outside the southern gate of the capital. A fragment of it is still in existence, the oldest historic bit of tree in the world. For twenty-two hundred years,

successive generations of its offspring have flourished at Buddhist sites all over Ceylon.

Tradition also says that Asoka sent the Eating-bowl of the Blessed One, filled with bodily relics which included the especially sacred relic of his right collarbone. The Thuparama, the earliest stupa to be erected in Ceylon, was built by Tissa at Anuradhapura for preserving this precious memento. The bowl he kept in the palace and worshipped daily.

After his death many vicissitudes befell it. In the first century A.D., it was carried off by the Tamils, but was recovered and brought back. When the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian visited Ceylon in the early part of the fifth century, it had again disappeared from the island. Fa Hian was convinced he had seen it in distant Peshawar. "It holds perhaps over two pecks and is of several colors, chiefly black. It is about one fifth of an inch thick, of transparent brilliancy and of a glossy luster. Poor people throw in a few flowers and it is full; the very rich may throw in ten thousand bushels, without ever filling it," wrote the pious pilgrim. Stories cropped up in later centuries of its reappearance in Ceylon once more. Marco Polo, on his way back to Europe from China at the end of the thirteenth century, mentioned that ambassadors sent in 1284 by the Mongol emperor Kublai Khan had succeeded in carrying it off to China. In still another version of its wanderings, it was said to have been taken to Persia. How it eventually reached Kandahar, in Afghanistan, where to this day it is supposed to be in the possession of a sect of Muslim dervishes, is not easy to determine.

The equally famous "tooth relic" became the center of another remarkable series of legends. After the Nirvana and cremation of the Buddha, tradition asserts that his four eyeteeth passed to Indra, to the Nagas of the Underworld and to the two kings of Gandhara and Kalinga. The Kalinga tooth, preserved for eight hundred years at Dantapura, "City of the Tooth" — usually identified with the modern Puri — was secretly carried away to Ceylon by a Kalinga princess about the beginning of

the fourth century, perhaps during the time of danger and confusion following the military conquests of Samudragupta. A special tower was built for it in the precincts of the Sinhalese royal palace, and the actual remains of this structure were discovered and identified by an inscription only ten years ago. Whenever the kings of Ceylon shifted the capital, the tooth invariably went with them, and a new tooth temple was built for it. Its possession, indeed, came to symbolize the right of sovereignty. The Greek monk Cosmos, who spent some time in Ceylon in the sixth century, said that above one of these tooth temples he saw a priceless ruby fixed, "as large as a great pine-cone and fiery red."

At last, in 1560, the Portuguese invaders of the island somehow got hold of the sacred relic and bore it off to Goa on the west coast of India, then the seat of their government in Asia. The reigning king of Burma, a devout Buddhist, offered to ransom it from the Portuguese for a huge sum, but his offer was spurned. In the presence of the Portuguese viceroy, the archbishop of Goa solemnly pounded it to bits, cast it into a fire and threw the ashes into the sea, imagining that he had destroyed forever the heathen heresy of its worship. But presently a whisper arose that the Portuguese had never gained possession of the real tooth, only an imitation of it! When the king of Burma accepted a bride from Ceylon, the Sinhalese king of Colombo obsequiously sent as part of her dowry what purported to be the Buddha's tooth, encased in a jeweled casket, and the precious relic was duly installed with great pomp in a pagoda at Pegu. In course of time, however, this tooth, too, was declared to be a forgery. The original, it was maintained, had never left Kandy, the medieval fortress capital in the heart of Ceylon. Hidden away during times of trouble, brought out again when the clouds passed, it had all along been carefully preserved in the island! Today a piece of darkened ivory two inches long, resting on a lotus of beaten gold within the white Temple of the Tooth at Kandy, is displayed as the Buddha's tooth relic. Every August



**The Royal Lion of the Kingdom of Kandy**

it is placed on the back of an elephant and taken out in a great procession while crowds of Sinhalese line the streets and reverently pay homage to it.

More tangibly historical, as evidence of Ceylon's early connection with India, are the numerous rock inscriptions engraved in the Asokan Brahmi style of writing of the second or third century B.C. They are the oldest inscriptions in Ceylon, and most of them briefly record pious donations to Buddhist monks or monastic institutions. There are architectural monuments of brick and stone also dating from the same period. King Tissa, who built the first stupa, also built the first monastery in Ceylon. It was erected on the hill of Mihintale, eight miles east of the old capital of Anuradhapura, to commemorate the place of Tissa's first meeting with Mahendra. Pilgrims still flock here to visit the cell where the royal monk Mahendra lived and where he breathed his last, on a narrow couch of stone.

The great period of building in Ceylon begins at the close of the second century B.C., under King Dutthagamani, who re-established unified rule in the island by defeating the Chola king Elara when he invaded the island from India with a large

force. Dutthagamani's most famous construction was the Ruanweli Dagaba. In this stupa were enshrined all the precious body relics which had previously been sent from India, together with an incalculable treasure of gold and pearls. Thousands of Indian Buddhist monks were invited to the Sinhalese capital for the dedication ceremony. Later on, however, the Cholas again invaded Ceylon, and the stupa was ruthlessly broken open and rifled of all its contents. Another of Dutthagamani's notable buildings at Anuradhapura was the so-called Brazen Palace, a nine-storied, thousand-chambered monastery, roofed with copper. Sixteen hundred stone pillars, twelve feet high, which once supported this monastery, still stand, in forty parallel rows. The element of size appealed strongly to these Buddhist king-builders of Ceylon. The giant Abhayagiriya Dagaba, begun by King Mahasena at the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century A.D., is 300 feet in diameter and rests on a platform covering eight acres. The Jetawanarama Stupa, near by, is of the same huge dimensions. No Indian stupa was as large in size.

It was far easier for India in the past, as it still is today, to establish direct contact with Burma and Malaya by way of the Bay of Bengal than by the connecting land routes passing through dense jungles and over jagged mountain ranges thousands of feet high. The Pali Jatakas contain the earliest references to eastward voyages undertaken by Indians, probably as early as the fifth century B.C. Such voyages usually had Suvarnabhumi, the "Gold Country," or Lower Burma, for their objective. At least a vague acquaintance with eastern countries or islands is also discernible in early Sanskrit literature. Mention of Suvarnadvipa, "Gold Island," and Javadvipa, "Barley Island," occurs in the *Ramayana* in a passage in which Sugriva, king of the monkeys, orders his battalions to search for the lost Sita even in such distant places as these, beyond the seas. The name Suvarnadvipa was first loosely applied to the whole of Malaya, but later was more closely identified with Sumatra. In the same way Javadvipa, used at one time or another for various localities in

Malaya, and also for both Sumatra and Java, was exclusively confined to the Java of today only as late as the ninth century.

The climate of Lower Burma has not been kind to ancient remains. Tangible traces of Indian contact go back only to the first few centuries of the present era, though Buddhist legends tell of two of Asoka's missionaries, Sona and Uttara, dispatched to Suvarnadvipa. The people inhabiting this region, then as now, were the Mons, who are definitely related in speech, and very probably in stock also, to the Khasis of Assam and the Mundas of central Asia. They are different from the Arakanese and the Burmese proper, who were originally of Mongolian race. Wide-scale Mon migrations certainly took place in prehistoric times, but whether from east to west, or west to east, is still a matter of conjecture, and Mon contacts with India are shrouded in mist. However, the ancient Mon capital of Thaton lies on the Gulf of Martaban, not far from the modern Moulmein, and the port was easily accessible to ships from India. Medieval chronicles of the Mons written in Pali, Mon and Burmese, all testify that Buddhism was established in Thaton by the first centuries of the present era. Confirmed in their faith during a visit made to Thaton in the fifth century by the great Buddhaghosa, Indian translator and commentator of the Pali texts, the Mons were closely associated from this time on with the Pali Buddhism of Ceylon.

Another small kingdom of southern Burma, partly contemporary with that of the Mons, was the Pyu kingdom of Old Prome. Despite the reckless use of Old Prome's archaeological treasures as ballast for the Prome-Rangoon railway line built a few decades ago, ruined stupas and other ancient objects going back to the sixth century have come to light in this region in considerable quantities. One of the stupas is a majestic structure rising from five superimposed terraces. The intact relic chamber of another was found to contain as a votive offering a miniature silver stupa with Buddha figures in relief and a mixed Pali-Pyu inscription. A manuscript of twenty gold leaves with extracts

of the Pali Canon inscribed in Pyu characters was also found in Prome. Incidentally, this Pyu writing, which is strikingly similar to early Kannada-Telugu script, was itself a direct importation from India. That both the Buddhism of the Greater Vehicle and Hinduism, as well as Pali Buddhism, once had their votaries in Old Prome is proved by other discoveries of clay tablets, inscribed plates of gold and silver, and sculptures in stone and bronze. Royal funerary urns with legends in Pyu also show that kings of the seventh and eighth centuries in southern Burma bore the familiar Indian titles of Varman and Vikrama. Varman formed part of the designation or title of the south-Indian Pallava rulers of this same period.

About the middle of the eleventh century, the Burmese king Anawrata, master of Upper Burma, conquered the old Mon kingdom of Thaton and the later Mon kingdom of Pegu. In Upper Burma, the first Buddhist king had reigned nine hundred years before, and Mahayana Buddhism was now well established there, but it appears that Anawrata had never seen any copies of the Pali scriptures. On being informed that thirty sets of the three *Pitakas* and many sacred Buddhist relics were to be found at the ancient city of Thaton, he boldly demanded a share of them. The king of Thaton refused, and Anawrata, bent on conquest, set out, as the Burmese *Glass Palace Chronicle* picturesquely states, with "eight hundred thousand boats and four-score million fighting men." What happened after the victory is told in these words: "The king brought away the sacred relics which were kept in a jeweled casket and worshipped by a line of kings in Thaton; and he placed the thirty sets of *Pitakas* on the king's thirty-two white elephants and brought them away. Moreover, he sent away in turn the mighty men of valour and all the host of elephants and horses. Thereafter he sent away separately, without mixing, such men as were skilled in carving, turning and painting; masons, moulders of plaster and flower-patterns; blacksmiths, silversmiths, braziers, founders of gongs

and cymbals, fligree flower workers; doctors and trainers of elephants and horses; makers of shields, forgers of cannon, muskets and bows; men skilled in frying, parching, baking and frizzling; hair-dressers, and men cunning in perfumes, odours, flowers and the juices of flowers. Moreover, to the noble Order, acquainted with the books of the Pitakas, he made fair appeal, and brought them away. He also took King Manuha and his family, and returned home."

Thus, with the Burmese conquest of the Mons in the eleventh century, Pali literature, monks to interpret it, the Pali language and script, and representatives of all the crafts borrowed from India, were passed on to Upper Burma.

Back in his capital of Pagan, Anawrata continued to tolerate all forms of worship, even the Tantric Buddhism of Bengal then at its height of popularity, but under his royal patronage the Pali Buddhism of Ceylon rapidly became dominant throughout the whole of Burma. This is the Buddhism which has ever since remained the religion of the people of Burma. With the help of the master workmen brought up from southern Burma, he and his successors set about making Pagan one of the proudest cities in the world. It is said that thirteen thousand pagodas and monasteries lifted their golden spires into the sky above the city. The ruins of eight hundred of them, many in a fairly good state of preservation, a few still in actual daily use, may be seen there to this day.

Anawrata and his son kept in intimate touch with India. They maintained the friendliest of relations with the neighboring Pala kings of Bengal and Bihar, and gained great fame for themselves by paying for the reconstruction of the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh-Gaya, which had fallen into disrepair. Indian Buddhists always received a warm welcome at Pagan. When Muslim invaders of northern India in the opening years of the thirteenth century compelled monks to flee from their monasteries in great numbers, some from Nalanda and other centers hurried to take

refuge in the Burmese capital. A fresh influx of Indian ideas came with them, revivifying the Burmese civilization and strengthening the ties with India.

Metal temple bells and gongs, wonderful carved work, gold and black lacquer illustrations of Buddhist legends and ancient texts, large white bell-shaped pagodas on high stepped platforms, guarded by Buddhist lions, crowning every available hill, frescoed walls, innumerable smiling Buddha images of tinted alabaster and brass or so-called "sleeping Buddhas," like the recumbent stone giant of Pegu, 180 feet long, are Burma's characteristic expression for the Indian religion she has made her own. The yellow-robed monks took upon themselves the schoolmaster's task of making Burma literate, and established thousands of monastic schools.

Limited researches in Malaya, whose people are now universally Muslim in faith, have yielded some twenty stones bearing Sanskrit messages, ruined brick stupas, deserted Buddhist caves and a number of images of Indian gods, in stone, bronze and brass. By the third or fourth centuries A.D., Indian colonists had settled at points of vantage all down the western coast of Malaya as far as Malacca, and some had already crossed over the narrow Kra Isthmus, from the port of Takuapa to the Bay of Bandon on the eastern side of the peninsula. The fertile valleys and plains of this region invited an agricultural type of settlement, in contrast to the tin-mining activities associated from earliest times with the interior of Malaya, or the busy trade of the ports. Adventurous Indians did not stop even here. They trekked on into Siam and Indo-China.

Malaya received its Indian colonists from both northern and southern India, and during the first centuries A.D. Brahminism and both types of Buddhism flourished among these settlers. A stone slab with a fourth-century Buddhist dedication has been found at a ruined shrine in Kedah, the oldest surviving building in southeast Asia. Four Sanskrit inscriptions in northern Malaya, belonging to the fifth century, contain the name of the

“great sailor” Buddhagupta of Bengal, and mention certain donations by him. His religious faith is evident from the outline tracing of a stupa above one of his inscriptions. The most impressive of pre-Muslim monuments in Malaya, however, are found in the Siamese part of Malaya, at Chaiya and Nakhon Sri-Thammarat. The Chaiya ruins consist of Buddhist brick temples built on the square plan of the earliest Gupta temples of northern India, though one of these temples has a roof in receding stories strongly reminiscent of the Pallava style of southern India. Nakhon Sri-Thammarat possesses a great bell-shaped stupa surrounded by a sculptured gallery a hundred feet long on each side. Some fifty smaller temples and shrines and hundreds of little votive stupas, besides 171 seated stone Buddhas, are scattered about the great courtyard of the main temple.

Chinese annals mention several embassies arriving in China from different kingdoms of Malaya, from the sixth century and onward. These historical records give an idea of the distinctly Indian character of some of these states at that period. For example, the “History of the Liang Dynasty” (A.D. 502–556) records the arrival in 515 of an envoy from the king of a state in northern Malaya called Lang-ya-su, bearing a letter mentioning that in this little state, already established for more than four hundred years, “the precious Sanskrit” was generally known. In the fifth century, kings with purely Indian names, sufficiently enlightened to employ state historians who accompanied their embassies to China, ruled over the Malayan kingdom of Pahoang (Pahang).

Indianized kingdoms also arose about the same time in Further Asia. Once more, it is thanks to the Chinese histories that an account of them has been preserved. A Brahmin named Kaundinya landed in Cambodia by sea from Malaya, in the fifth century A.D. He must have arrived with supporters, for he is said to have defeated the naval forces of Queen Willowleaf, sent to oppose him. He made up for his conquest by chivalrously marrying the queen, and it was he who founded the first Indian

kingdom in Indo-China, called Funan by the Chinese, which reduced to vassalage ten neighboring kingdoms in the regions of Laos, Cochin-China and southern Siam, and endured altogether for six centuries. The primitive inhabitants were soon taught to wear clothes, and foreign merchants, skilled craftsmen and learned men began to frequent the chief cities of Funan. The Chinese official historian, describing Funan, makes this interesting note: "More than a thousand Brahmins reside there. People follow their doctrines, and give them their daughters in marriage. They read their sacred books day and night."

In the third century, the first Chinese mission visited Funan, and one of its members actually wrote a book about his travels. It seems that an Indian merchant who had recently arrived in the country had deeply stirred the king of Funan by his glowing description of the Indian motherland.

"How long does it take to go there?" asked the king.

"The journey there and back takes a good three years, it may be four," replied the merchant.

The king at once decided to send an embassy to India, headed by one of his own relatives. The Chinese mission met the members of this expedition just after their return to Funan, and heard that they had succeeded in reaching the Indian capital — probably Pataliputra. They also saw with their own eyes four Yue-chi horses, sent as a present to the king of Funan by the king of India.

The Chinese annals also record that a second Indian Kaundinya, with the personal name of Jayavarman, became ruler of Funan in the fifth century. He had heard a mysterious voice commanding him, "You must go and reign in Funan." Rejoicing at heart, he set out from Pan-pan, in northeastern Malaya and arrived in Funan. "The whole kingdom arose with enthusiasm, came to meet him and chose him as their king. He changed all the rules according to the customs of India."

The ruins of sixty brick Hindu temple towers have been found in ancient Funan. Its early Brahmin kings, who won their king-

dom by aggressive warfare, generally favored Shiva worship, but King Gunavarman of the fifth century installed Vishnu foot-prints for perpetual worship, according to a Sanskrit inscription which exists.

In spite of the royal favor extended to Hinduism, Buddhism was also known in Funan. An Indian monk, Sakya-Nagasena, resident there, was twice chosen to accompany embassies from Funan to China, and the presents he took along for the Chinese emperor included miniature ivory stupas and coral and sandal-wood Buddhas, along with some tame elephants. Buddhist monks also went from Funan to China to make some of the first Chinese translations of the Buddhist scriptures.

A second Indianized kingdom, Dvaravati, arose in the Indo-Chinese peninsula in what is now central Siam. Mons from Lower Burma drifted eastward as early as the second or third century, carrying their Hinayana Buddhism with them, and there founded an independent kingdom which lasted until the eleventh century. Dvaravati kept up continuous relations with India, both by way of the trade route across the Kra Isthmus and by an old pass in the north leading to the Gulf of Martaban. Bronze Buddhas unmistakably originating in Amaravati in south India, Gupta images from the Ganges Valley, ruined stupas and monasteries of an archaic Indian type and tablets with the Pali Buddhist creed in south-Indian Pallava characters are symbols of the earliest contacts between Siam and India.

Dvaravati also converted the Mongolian Thais, ancestors of the present-day Siamese, who overran the country in the thirteenth century. The first act of the new Thai king was to build a Buddhist temple at his capital of Chiangmai, on the Mekong. This temple was a copy of the Mahabodhi temple at Pagan, which was itself a copy of the famous Bodhi-Gaya temple in India. The Thais rapidly extended their power southward into Malaya, and here they touched another stream of Buddhist influence emanating directly from Ceylon. A king of Ceylon sent one of the Thai rulers a much-prized Buddha image, with a

flamelike emblem rising from the crown of its head. This image, still cherished in Bangkok, inspired a new school of Siamese sculpture. From this time on, the typical Siamese Buddha was a slender figure with flame-crowned oval face wearing a strange all-pervasive smile. Siam also developed its own distinctive type of pagoda, or *wat*, a charming but fragile structure, often made entirely of broken bits of Chinese porcelain.

Indo-China also saw the birth of a third Indianized kingdom towards the close of the second century, the seaboard state of Champa, destined to survive for nearly fourteen hundred years. The colony undoubtedly took its name from Champa in Bengal — Bhagalpur of today — from which the original Indian immigrants must have come. The earlier inhabitants of Champa were of mixed Malay and Polynesian stock, and their wealth was chiefly derived from the lucrative practice of piracy, which they carried on with great zeal up and down the coast of the China Sea. They waged frequent wars with their neighbors, especially the Annamites of Tongkin in the north. Ultimately the Annamites succeeded in throwing off the Chinese yoke which had long bound them, thus becoming free to increase their pressure on the Chams. The latter were forced to withdraw farther and farther south, but retreat did not save them. They suffered a final disastrous defeat and political extinction in A.D. 1471.

Ruled by Hindu, or Hinduized, dynasties for centuries, the primitive Chams were slowly tamed. With their inborn vigor, they were able to create remarkable sculptures and a highly original type of brick temple architecture, the earliest surviving examples of which are contemporaneous with the first temples constructed by the Pallavas in south India. The Cham temple, unlike the later Indian temple, never developed into a vast architectural complex. It always remained an isolated structure, consisting of a square shrine with a plain interior as the dwelling place of the god, topped by a huge, highly ornamental tower. But such temples were sometimes grouped together into im-

pressive temple cities. The two best-known Cham temple groups, Mi-song and Dong-duong, both lie within twenty-five miles of the little port of Tourane, midway along the coast of modern Annam. In this locality was the site of the earliest capital of Champa, now marked by an insignificant village surrounded by green rice fields. At Mi-song no less than sixty ruined shrines, ranging in date from the seventh to the twelfth centuries, cluster together. A little to the southwest, Dong-duong has temple remains of the ninth and tenth centuries.

Shiva, his Sakti, and his two sons Ganesa and Skanda, occupied first place among Hindu deities worshipped in Champa, and many ancient Shiva-*lingas*, phallic symbols of creation, rise from carved altars all over the country. Vishnu was less popular, but nevertheless the principal temple of Mi-song is sculptured with reliefs illustrating the story of Krishna. Buddhism never competed successfully with Hinduism in Champa, but the largest temple at Dong-duong was Buddhist, and a bronze standing Buddha, of great dignity, found at this place is, curiously enough, an exact replica of a Buddha from Amaravati, which may now be seen in the Madras Museum.

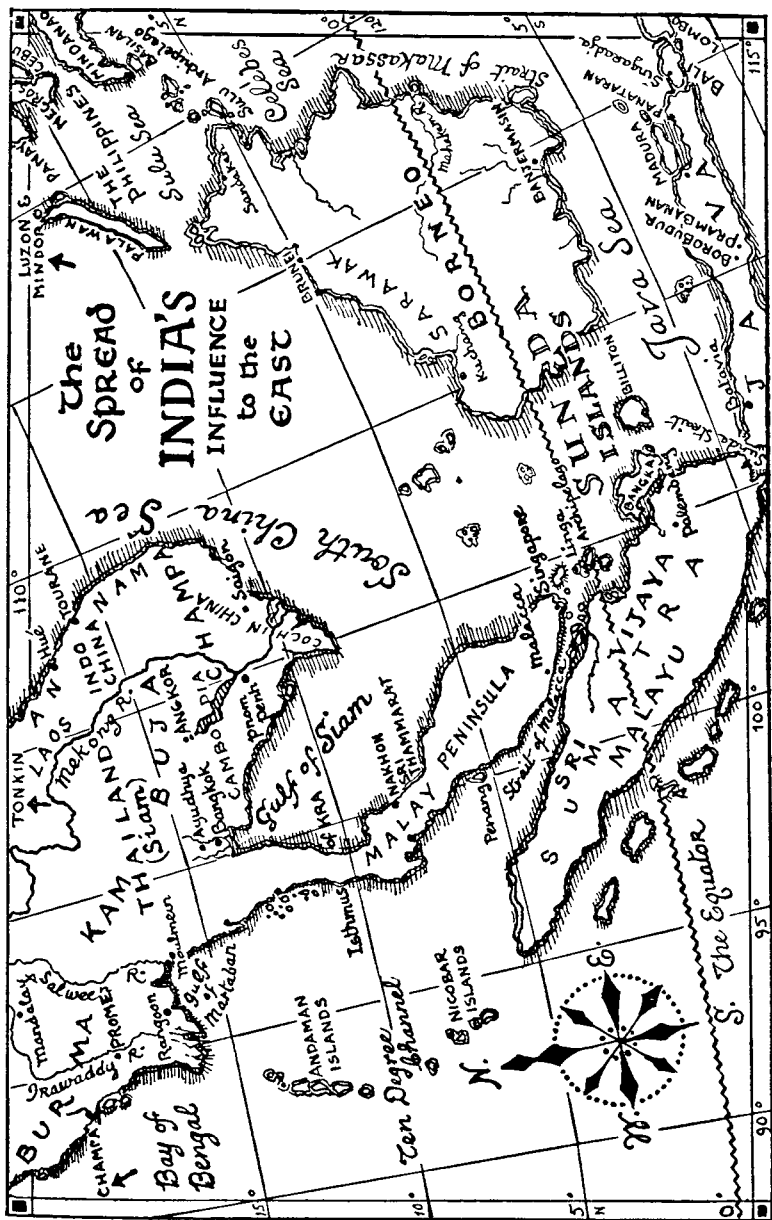
Cham figure sculpture in its earliest phase closely followed Gupta models, not only in subject matter but to a great extent in technique also. It was simple and natural, and it possessed striking dignity and power. It seems probable that Brahmin priests from India originally supervised both temple-building and image-making in Champa, and taught the Gupta conventions of art in these matters. At Mi-song, engraved Sanskrit letters were discovered to have formed the numbering system for assembling the separate stones of a particularly well-carved pedestal, bearing a date in the Indian Saka era equivalent to A.D. 657.

A strong Further East tendency to subordinate sculpture to decoration ultimately triumphed in Champa. At its best, this love of decoration expressed itself in doorways and pillars adorned with an incredibly intricate stone foliation of leaf, bud and flower, inset with medallions of adoring anchorites and celestial

dancers forever poised on one toe, intent on charming the gods. As Indian influences weakened and the Gupta ideal of restraint vanished, Cham art began to grow heavier and coarser. Stone images were often provided with bizarre crowns of bronze or gold encrusted with glittering gems. Real earrings dangled from extended ear lobes and eyes were fashioned of semi-precious stones. Animal sculpture in particular became highly exuberant and un-Indian. Cham lions are prancing creatures with horns and tails usually ending in ornate leafy scrolls! Vishnu's winged and beaked Garuda shows a similar vitality and decorative quality. Cham fantasy reached its peak in the delineation of dragons, invented in China, and a strange florid creature with bulging eyeballs and huge open jaws known as the Makara — an essentially Polynesian creation. In spite of the Hindu background of Champa civilization, the underlying Polynesian element so often noticeable in Cham art suggests comparison with Peruvian, Mayan and Aztec art, as they developed far away on the other side of the Pacific.

All the kingdoms of Indo-China, ancient or modern, Hindu or Buddhist, pale into insignificance before the marvel of the fourth and last of the Indianized states to arise in the peninsula — the Cambodian kingdom of the Khmers. Pearl-laden Khmer princes, half sacred during their lifetime and wholly deified after their death, struck terror and envy into the hearts of Chams, Annamites, Burmese and Siamese alike, for the better part of eight long centuries. It was only in the fourteenth century that the Siamese finally succeeded in capturing the mighty Khmer capital of Angkor Thom and destroying the Khmers.

Fortunately for posterity, Cambodia did not lie on any main highroad of the world. Unknown and forgotten, the ruins of the wonderful Khmer cities and temples remained locked in a silent death struggle with the all-enveloping jungle. Once, in the sixteenth century, a lonely French priest passed by. Then another Frenchman officially rediscovered Angkor in 1861.



When the district was ceded to French Indo-China by Siam in 1907 and for the first time news of the vanished Khmer civilization filtered out to a startled world, archaeologists, scholars and tourists of all nationalities hurried to Cambodia to gaze on some of the most awe-inspiring ruins to be found anywhere in the world.

What did they find? What seemed at first only catastrophic isolation! After the original havoc wrought by the enemies of the Khmers, prowling thieves had ransacked the sacred buildings for hidden treasure. In their ignorance and greed, they had even pulled out iron cramps strengthening the corners of buildings. Then had come the tropical forest, creeping up stealthily like a green sea, more irresistible than any previous foe. Trees sent forth giant roots which pried their way between stones, smothered walls, clambered up towers, twisted their way like mighty pythons through gaping doors and windows. Creepers flung out sinuous arms in a strangling embrace. To push the jungle back and clear the ruins was a labor almost equal to that of the original builders.

According to their own legend, the Khmers had as their mythical ancestor the Indian sage Kambu, and on this account they called themselves sons of Kambu and their country Kambuja, or Cambodia. The god Shiva himself had presented Kambu with his lovely wife Mera, but she died, and in inconsolable grief Kambu began to wander over the face of the wide earth. At last he came to an arid waste which seemed to match the burnt-out crater of his heart. He entered a cave, and was surprised to find himself in a dim world of writhing many-hooded Nagas, or snake people, swimming about in the dark pools. "Who are you?" asked the Nagas. "I am Kambu Svayambhuva, king of the Indian country," he replied. The Nagas then begged Kambu to remain with them. After a long time, his grief at last assuaged, he consented to marry the daughter of the Naga king. By their magic, the Nagas turned the desert into a beautiful country of flowing rivers and charming lakes, so that the de-

scendants of Kambu and the Naga princess might live forever in prosperity and joy.

Less poetically, the Khmers appear to have erupted quite suddenly onto the stage of history about the middle of the sixth century. The Chinese refer to their country as Chen-la and mention that it was formerly a vassal state paying tribute to Funan in the south. At the end of the sixth century, however, "Chitrasena conquered Funan and brought it fully under control." Perhaps the Khmers stemmed from some wild frontier tribe inhabiting the borderland of Burma and China. The language they spoke was definitely akin to the Mon tongue, but their stone inscriptions, left behind by the hundreds, are nearly all in classic Sanskrit verse, and their dynastic genealogies list thirty-two Khmer kings reigning between the sixth and the twelfth centuries, all of whom have Indian names ending in Varman. Intermarriages between Khmer chiefs and the Brahmin-descended royal families of Funan are mentioned in some of the earlier inscriptions, and Indian civilization seems to have spread northward from Funan into Cambodia.

Alternately Hindu or Buddhist, the great kings of ancient Cambodia vied with one another in warlike exploits to extend the boundaries of their kingdom at the cost of neighbors. In the twelfth century, Cambodia extended from the China Sea to the Bay of Bengal. Using the natural wealth of the land and the inexhaustible supply of labor furnished by countless prisoners of war, the rulers created magnificent cities and temples which even in their present state of ruin stir the beholder to dazed wonder.

Scattered through the mountains and jungles of Cambodia more than six hundred ruined Khmer monuments may still be counted — temples, palaces, walls, gates, terraces, reservoirs, bridges. Several early capitals have now been traced, but for five centuries the most glorious Khmer capital was Angkor Thom. The name is a corruption of the Sanskrit *nagara*, "city," and the Khmer *damma*, "great," and so literally means "Great

City." This site was happily chosen by King Yasovarman in the ninth century, in the very heart of Cambodia. It was conveniently close to a large lake which gave anchorage for the Khmer navy, at the same time allowing easy access to the sea through the Mekong River. All the finest Khmer buildings are to be found in or near Angkor. The huge gray temple of Prah Khan lies like a sunken galleon on the floor of the orchid-hung forest, five miles north of the city ramparts. Ta Prohm and Banteai Kedei, nearly as large, are the same distance away on the east. Angkor Wat, hugest temple of all, rises from the open plain a mile to the south.

Angkor Wat, a weathered gray pile, exceeds in size and grandeur all other Khmer monuments. It has the distinction of being actually the largest temple in the world. It was built in the twelfth century by Suryavarman II as a tomb temple, to contain his own ashes and to be dedicated after his death to himself, in his deified form of Parama-Vishnuloka, identified with Vishnu. Except that it faces west instead of east, as the most accessible approach from the city, Angkor Wat is typical of all other Khmer temples of the great period of building in ancient Cambodia. It possesses a perfect architectural unity, and displays none of the experimental vagaries which may sometimes be detected in the monumental buildings of the Khmers.

A raised causeway of flagstones leads from the main road across a broad moat to the outer entrance gallery, or portico, of Angkor Wat. This portico, which is in reality a spacious building a thousand feet long, forms the front part of the wall bounding the enclosure on all four sides. The causeway re-emerges on the other side of the portico and continues again in a straight line, through a park filled with palms, to the main entrance of the temple. From road to temple, it traverses a distance of two thousand feet. The moat is six hundred feet wide, and the surrounding wall is nearly three miles long.

The great temple rises steeply in the form of three concentric rectangular galleries, each doubling in height the preceding one.

The galleries are connected by precipitous stairs and intervening open terraces. The innermost of the three galleries is reached by twelve flights of steps, three flights on each side, and is crowned by a cluster of five tall domes, four rising from the corners and the largest from the center of the structure. The lotus-bud pinnacle of the great central stone tower dominates the green plain below from a magnificent height of 213 feet. The holy of holies, where the ashes of King Suryavarman must once have lain, is a small dark empty chamber at the top of the building, placed exactly beneath the central tower.

All this vast edifice, from top to bottom, has been chiseled into endless beautiful designs and patterns, as if it were soft wood instead of hard stone. Broad openings, which serve the purpose of windows, are barred with slender stone colonnettes precisely imitating wooden ones turned on a lathe. The high plinths have row upon row of carved bands and borders. Miles of roof stones have been grooved to fit together like tiles. Square columns supporting the narrow stone vaults of the galleries are covered with flower-and-bird medallions and ornamental niches framing little figures. Everywhere are troupes of sacred dancers. Within the first gallery is no less than a whole half mile of sculptured bas-reliefs. At places, even the outer walls are sculptured. Maidens, linked arm in arm and wearing three- or five-pointed tiaras, jeweled necklaces and girdles and long skirts with floating angular scarves, pose as if they were trying to catch a glimpse of their own charms in the sunken stone tanks of the terrace at their feet.

In contrast to these accentuated reliefs, the sculptured story-book of the first gallery is delicately and lightly executed, scarcely a half inch in depth. The Khmer artists who carved these vast panels, ninety or a hundred yards long, must have given their lives to the work. Nowhere in India are there sculptures on anything like such an enormous scale. The themes of the bas-reliefs are taken straight from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* of India. Vishnu, as might be expected in a temple built

by one who claimed to be his earthly representative, occupies chief place in the decorations — Vishnu in his various Incarnations as Rama, Krishna, the Tortoise upholding the world, Narayana sleeping on the serpent between the cycles of creation and dissolution. Vishnu is supreme at Angkor Wat, but other Indian gods have not been forgotten. Shiva dances his cosmic



**The Khmer Smile**  
XII-XIII Century

dance, fights Arjuna in the guise of the wild hunter, reduces Kama, god of love, to ashes for disturbing his meditation, overwhelms Ravana for daring to shake his palace and frighten Parvati on the summit of the Kailasa mountain.

Only the southern wing at Angkor Wat has reliefs of another sort. One long historical panel shows Suryavarman II himself, or rather in this case "His Majesty Parama-Vishnuloka," thus introduced in two short inscriptions in the Khmer language, written in an alphabet derived from India. First, he is seen seated on a throne on a hilltop, surrounded by Brahmins, engaged in giving orders to his various ministers for assembling his troops.

Later on he is shown again, this time standing on his mighty war elephant. Fourteen royal parasols are held aloft around him by parasol-bearers, and his ensign-bearer precedes him, grasping a pole on the top of which appears a little image of Vishnu mounted on the sacred bird Garuda. Along the base of the panel, a march-past of the Khmer infantry takes place, and behind the Khmers come Siamese levies, in their own distinctive dress. The great procession also includes Brahmins carrying an ark with the "sacred fire" of Vedic worship, as well as dancing buffoons and musicians. Royal ladies in litters and palanquins, attended by female servants plying long-handled fans, also form part of the long cortege.

Another panel in the same gallery is designed to impress upon the beholder the lesson of good and evil actions attached to the doctrine of rebirth. Men and women advance in line to the judgment seat, presided over by Yama, god of death, who is assisted by Chitragupta, keeper of the fatal records. Here the panel divides to show heaven above and hell below. There are thirty-two separate hells towards which sinners are being dragged by fiends. Brief inscriptions explain the scenes which follow. Those who insult gods, spiritual preceptors or Brahmins suffer appropriate punishment in the hell of worms; the untruthful find themselves hanging from thorny trees; those who wilfully damage the properties of others have their bones crushed; those who betray a trust are sawed in two; those who steal or who do not pay their just debts are thrust upside down into boiling cauldrons or roasted alive on pans of burning coals. There is no doubt of the fate in store for evildoers. All the tortures are graphically portrayed in minutest detail. On the other hand, righteous Khmers ascend to heaven, where they are somewhat monotonously depicted in thirty-seven tableaux. Seated in small pavilions with looped-back curtains, they are placidly enjoying the bliss of family life and plenty of good things to eat spread out before them.

The religion of the Khmers at the time when Angkor Wat

was built was a curious mixture of the distinctive cult of a Royal God and of Tantric Hinduism and Buddhism, then scarcely distinguishable. A king might personally favor Buddhism or Hinduism, but he was expected to give state support to all the great temples, whatever the deity worshipped. Some idea of the nature of the Khmer temple establishment is revealed in a remarkable inscription of 145 Sanskrit stanzas set up in 1186 in the Ta Prohm temple outside Angkor Thom, by the Buddhist king Jayavarman VII. This establishment was more or less identical with the great establishments in south India at the same period.

Ta Prohm was dedicated to an image of the king's mother in the form of the Mahayana Buddhist divinity Prajnaparamita, or "Holy Wisdom." It also contained 260 other images, including one of the king's royal preceptor. Altogether 79,365 persons were on the temple registry, of whom 12,640 had the right of lodging within the temple precincts. The privileged persons included 18 chief priests, 2125 ordinary officiating priests and 615 temple dancers. Menial services in connection with the temple were performed by Cham and Burmese prisoners of war and by innumerable slaves who formed the lowest division, or caste, of Khmer society. Armed guards protected the temple treasures, consisting of 40,620 pearls, 35 diamonds, 4540 other precious stones such as rubies and cat's-eyes, many cauldrons of gold, great numbers of gold and silver utensils used in the temple services, as well as quantities of ordinary utensils made of copper, bronze, tin or lead, 965 Chinese mosquito curtains of silk gauze, and 523 silk parasols with handles of gold carried in temple processions.

The same inscription informs the reader that Jayavarman VII fostered all the pious works of a good Buddhist. He fed daily from his palace 489 "saints" and supported 970 students residing with their teachers. He maintained 102 hospitals throughout his realm for free treatment of patients, without regard to caste. For the upkeep of these hospitals 81,600 men and women were required. The list of articles annually supplied from the royal

storehouse included such remedies as honey, camphor, ginger and a paste made from ten kinds of roots. Specific mention is made of the annual distribution of 1960 boxes of pills for piles. All Jayavarman's hospitals were dedicated to the Buddha Bhaisiyaguru, the Divine Physician. This deity is still worshipped as the healer of the sick by Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan Buddhists. A seated image of Bhaisiyaguru, a bowl of medicaments in one hand and a myrobalan-fruit in the other, was enshrined in a special chapel which adjoined each hospital.

Jayavarman's versatile genius was also responsible for the most important building enterprises at Angkor Thom, the Khmer capital. These were the great stone causeways over the moat, the tall city gates, and the many-towered Bayon in the center of the city, a temple second in size only to Angkor Wat, and with an equally wonderful series of bas-reliefs. Colossal kneeling figures representing the gods and demons of Indian mythology, fifty-four stone giants in each row, formerly lined both sides of the five causeways. They grasped in their arms the body of a huge Naga, which thus formed a magnificent parapet. Many of the petrified giants were later thrown down, and heads and broken limbs still strew the ground, but French archaeologists have repaired the damage as best they could. The giant causeways led to the massive gates sixty feet high, adjoining the city ramparts. These gateways were flanked by three-headed elephants of stone, lazily swinging delicate clusters of water lilies in their trunks. The passage was just wide enough for a single chariot or elephant to pass through. High overhead, forming the dome of each gate, were four huge faces, or masks, framed by pendant earrings, each eight feet from brow to chin. Forbiddingly stern, they glared at the four cardinal points.

These same strange faces of the gates of Angkor Thom are to be seen again on the fifty towers of the Bayon. Etched by centuries of rain or bleached by the burning tropical sun, festooned with gray lichens or with waving green hair of grass or trees now sprouting from their lotus crowns, some of the two hundred

huge faces seem to weep, some to smile, some to open their eyes, some to shut them, some to stare down gloomily or with sinister animosity at puny man, some with benign haunting compassion! The broad straight mouths are traced with double outlines. The straight heavy brows meet in the middle. In the center of the foreheads a third eye is placed vertically. Early investigators imagined that the great faces of Angkor were a representation of the four-faced Shiva, but late researches have proved that the God of the Bayon and of the city gates is no other than Avalokitesvara, the omnipresent, all-seeing, all-merciful Bodhisattva of Mahayana Buddhism — presented in the guise of a portrait statue of Jayavarman VII, with the king's own heavy features!

Fighters, builders and inveterate temple-goers though the Khmers were, they were also saturated with Sanskrit learning. Asramas, or forest retreats and schools, of the purely Indian type, were numerous in Cambodia. Under the guidance of Brahmin pundits, the Khmer princes were taught the ancient Vedic rites, or studied Indian astronomy, grammar, logic and literature. There are direct quotations from or mention by name in the Khmer inscriptions of the Vedas, Puranas, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, Harivamsa, Yoga and Nyaya philosophical systems, Manu, Panini, Patanjali, Susruta, Gunadhya, Mayura, Vatsayana and Kanada. Certain Tantric texts are also named, and ancient manuscripts of these very texts have recently been discovered in Nepal. Sanskrit technical treatises, too, were familiar to the Khmers. The Sanskrit names of thirteen musical instruments are given in descriptions of the martial music to which the Khmer army marched out to battle. The thoroughly Indian institution of public recitation without interruption of the great Sanskrit epics was equally popular among the Khmers. On these and other occasions pious donors are recorded as making gifts of sacred books to various temples. All the great Khmer temples had libraries attached to them, evidently well-stocked with Sanskrit manuscripts. Many of the stone libraries remain, but the

manuscripts, alas, were irretrievably lost during the Siamese invasions of the fourteenth century.

In cold rows, as in a museum, broken Buddhas line the long gray corridors of Angkor Wat. An unbridgable gulf lies between past and present. Simple folk from a village near by — Cambodians, Siamese, Chinese — wander casually through the dim shadows, uttering a humble prayer and proffering a mari-gold or two, or perhaps a stick of lighted incense. Indignant bats in the gloom overhead squeak a shrill protest at this challenge to their supremacy. From time to time, a cadence of chanting drifts by on the wind. The present-day monks have built themselves a flimsy wooden monastery in the park of the old temple, but the sutras they chant are those of the Lesser Vehicle, the Buddhism adopted by Cambodia after the Siamese conquest. Were the Khmers in their turn carried away as slaves, as they had made slaves of so many of their victims in the days of their glory? Did pestilence follow war, and sweep them all away? No answer comes. History merely records that another remarkable civilization, which would never have come into being without the inspiration furnished by India, had reached an end.

Indian colonies and kingdoms also arose and fell in Indonesia. Sumatra had its great Buddhist kingdoms, Java its Hindu ones. Some of them lasted until after the discovery of America.

Sumatra was certainly visited by Indian ships and received Indian religious missions from a very early time. Its proximity to Malaya made it a natural steppingstone on the route farther east. But Sumatra has not yet been really explored, from an archaeological point of view. Transport is difficult, the population is sparse and the marshy lowlands and dense jungles of Sumatra are particularly unhealthy. Of its ninety mountains of volcanic origin, twelve are still active. Eruptions through the centuries must have worked great havoc, repeatedly burying ancient remains under thick deposits of ash. Yet ruined stupas have come to light in many parts of the island, as well as Indian

types of images and a few important inscriptions. Some day, perhaps, the early history of Sumatra will become better known. Meanwhile, the more easily accessible island of Java is singularly rich in archaeological treasures, and Javanese chronicles and early Javanese literature also throw a good deal of light on the past.

A legend is still cherished in Java that the Rishi Agastya came over from India and settled in the island long, long ago. Inscribed statues of the ancient Indian sage prove the existence in the eighth and ninth centuries of an Agastya cult, but he could scarcely have been among the early colonists. Indians did arrive in the eastern archipelago, however, at some very early period. Four stone posts inscribed in Sanskrit in an archaic writing of the Pallava Grantha style, probably belonging to the fourth century A.D., have been found in Borneo, northeast of Java. They record that King Mulavarman, third in the dynastic line, performed a great religious sacrifice accompanied by a gift of 20,000 cows to Brahmins. A cave in eastern Borneo has yielded twelve primitive sandstone images of Buddhist and Brahmanic deities. A gold *linga*, recovered from a river bed, and a small gold figure of a four-armed Vishnu are additional evidence that early Indian settlements existed in Borneo.

Inscriptions so far discovered in Java are later than those from Borneo. The earliest come from western Java and have been assigned to the fifth century. Like the Borneo inscriptions, they are in Pallava Sanskrit. They give the information that a king named Purnavarman, whose footprints resembled those of Vishnu, reigned in Taruma. He and his father constructed two canals, called by the names of two rivers in India, Chandraganga and Gomati. Purnavarman, upon the completion of his canal, paid a fee of a thousand cows to the Brahmins. Since kings with Indian names, perfectly acquainted with Sanskrit and Indian in religion and custom, were already ruling over part of Java in the fifth century A.D., obviously the first Indian colonies must

have been established on the island at least a century or two before.

The medieval Javanese chronicles assert that 20,000 Indian families arrived in Java from Kalinga in the second century A.D. No explanation is offered for this formidable exodus from India, but the immigrants are said to have prospered and multiplied, to have built cities and towns, and to have taught the primitive inhabitants all the civilized arts, as well as to have promoted trade and industry. On another occasion, another five thousand Indians are said to have arrived in six large ships and a hundred small ones, this time from India's west coast. The party included soldiers, craftsmen, cultivators, physicians and poets, and it was under the leadership of Prince Aji Saka, who had obeyed his father's orders to sail away just as his country was about to be overwhelmed by some unnamed enemy. The refugees were received with great friendliness by the Javanese, and were permitted to invite another two thousand of their countrymen, this time with sculptors and metalworkers, to join them. The invasion does not appear to have been considered hostile by the Javanese. Through stories of this sort, whether fact or fiction, one catches a fleeting glimpse of the manner in which the Indo-Javanese civilization took birth.

The first dependable author known to have made observations about Java in his own time is the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian, though a brief reference to the country had previously appeared in the Han Annals. It was to the effect that in A.D. 132 an envoy had arrived at the Han court from a Javanese king named Devavarman, and that the Chinese emperor was pleased to present the king, through his ambassador, with a golden seal and a purple ribbon. When Fa Hian, in A.D. 414, was on his way back to China from Ceylon, he encountered a terrific storm which blew his ship far off the normal course. As a result, the ship had to seek shelter in a Javanese port. Here Fa Hian waited for five months, before another ship was available to take him the rest

of the way home. In the enforced interval of waiting, he used his eyes and ears to learn all he could about Java. As a pious Buddhist, he was especially disappointed to find that the people favored Hinduism. "Heresies and Brahmanism are flourishing," he wrote in disgust, "while the faith of the Buddha is in a very unsatisfactory condition."

Before the fifth century, the Indians who had gone to Java were chiefly Hindus, but ten years after Fa Hian's brief visit a distinguished Buddhist monk from distant Kashmir, or perhaps Kapisa, in Afghanistan, landed in Java. This was the royal monk Gunavarman who had refused to accept a proffered throne and had chosen instead the life of a Buddhist monk. Imbued with true missionary zeal, he first went to Ceylon and then journeyed to Java, where he managed to convert the reigning king, together with the queen mother, to the Buddhism of the Lesser Vehicle which he himself followed. He was invited to dedicate the first Buddhist monastery erected in Java. Afterwards he went on to China, built more monasteries there, founded the first Order of Chinese Buddhist nuns and finally died in China in A.D. 431. Hinduism amicably made room for Buddhism, and without quarreling the votaries of each religion were soon building their respective temples side by side.

After a period of obscurity, a new great center of Buddhism arose in the Southern Seas. Attention shifts back to Sumatra once more, and again the principal witness is a Chinese pilgrim. I-tsing. I-tsing spent altogether eight years in the Sumatran kingdom of Sri Vijaya, on his way to and from India in the latter half of the seventh century. More than a thousand Buddhist monks resided in the capital while he was there, and it was under their tutelage that on his outward journey he diligently studied Sanskrit, and with their help on his way back began translating some of the four hundred manuscripts he had collected at Nalanda. "They study and investigate all the subjects that exist, just as in India," he wrote in the book he has left. "The rules and ceremonies are not at all different. If a Chinese priest

wishes to go to the West in order to hear and read, he had better stay here one or two years and practise the proper rules, and then proceed to India." The Buddhist colleges of Sri Vijaya were long held in high repute. Even distinguished Indian Buddhists like Dharmapala of Kanchi and Atisa of Bengal traveled all the way to Sumatra and stayed many years, in order to master the abstruse points of doctrine as taught by learned Vijayan professors. The Buddhist kingdom of Sumatra played an important part in spreading Indian culture throughout the Malayan archipelago.

There is reason to believe that Sri Vijaya was originally a small state on the northern side of the Straits of Malacca. It began to expand, and just before I-tsing's time it had already subjugated Malayu, an older Sumatran Buddhist kingdom, and set up its capital — Vijaya, or Visaya — in the eastern part of Sumatra. The site is usually identified with the modern oil port of Palembang. From this neighborhood, at any rate, have come the two earliest Sri Vijayan inscriptions, which are written in the Malay language and have dates in the Saka Era corresponding to A.D. 684 and 688. The Sri Vijayan navy from this strategic position could exercise vigilant and profitable control over the valuable three-cornered trade of China, India and Arabia, constantly passing through the Malacca Straits.

But Sumatra was not enough to satisfy the growing appetite for empire of the kings of Sri Vijaya. In 686, their army invaded and conquered western Java and then passed over into Malaya and continued a victorious progress northward up the peninsula. All the little Hindu states in Malaya were now caught within the Sri Vijayan net. Sri Vijayan colonies were also planted in distant places like Borneo and the Philippine Islands. The Philippine settlements were not direct conquests, but offshoots thrown out from settlements already established in Banjermasin and Bruni, in Borneo. The people of the central Philippines still call themselves Visayans. Manuscripts written in Indian syllabic alphabets have been found in the islands of Panay and Luzon,

and similar Indian alphabets were actually still in use among some of the primitive tribes in the interior of Mindanao and Mindoro as late as 1900. One of the old manuscripts just referred to relates that settlers, some with very Indian-sounding names, arrived from Bruni, in northern Borneo, and that these men brought with them a knowledge of metals, a well-developed law code and their own peculiar system of writing. Unfortunately the zeal of Spanish priests and friars of later times led them to destroy every vestige of what seemed to them only pagan superstition. One priest of Legaspi's time boasted that he had burned more than three hundred manuscripts from southern Luzon! Had such senseless destruction not taken place, much more might now be known of the early Indian influences in the islands.

Sri Vijaya also extended its conquests to Malaya. There are some confused Chinese and Arab statements about this, but the principal evidence is a Sanskrit inscription of A.D. 775 from Ligor, which lies close to the old Buddhist colony of Nakhon Sri-Thammarat in northern Malaya. The inscription mentions three Buddhist temples, three stupas and two monasteries built at this place by order of the Sri Vijayan kings. Unless northern Malaya was under Sri Vijaya at this period, it scarcely seems credible that kings of Sri Vijaya would be building so far afield.

On another face of the same stone is a slightly later inscription, which refers to Sri Maharaja, a lord of the Sailendra Dynasty. Like the Sri Vijayan rulers who preceded them, all the Sailendra kings were ardent Mahayana Buddhists. It was formerly assumed that the Sailendras, or "Lords of the Mountain," represented the most important dynasty of Sri Vijaya. Present research indicates that in reality the Sailendras conquered the Sumatran kingdom of Sri Vijaya and reduced it to a state of complete dependency towards the close of the eighth century. Known to the Chinese as San-fo-tsi and to the Arabs as Zabag, the Sailendras now became the dominant power in Malaya and

proceeded to create a vast Pacific empire, over which they ruled in undisputed possession for the next four centuries.

The origin of the Sailendras is still obscure. Three theories concerning them are that they came from Kalinga in India, that they were related to the Indian rulers of Funan and that they first arose to power in Java. At any rate, they chose Kataha, or Kadara, a port on the western coast of the Malay Peninsula, probably in Kedah or Perak, as their official seat of government.

From a twelfth-century account by a Chinese port commissioner of countries with whom China was then trading, a good deal of information is available about the Sailendra kingdom, or San-fo-tsi. At this time, it was overlord of fifteen dependent states in Java, Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Arab writers from the ninth century onward also make frequent mention of the wealth and grandeur of Zabag. The narrative of how the maharaja of Zabag once invaded the Khmer country comes down from the merchant Sulayman, who traveled to India and Malaya in the ninth century. The envy of the Khmer king, it seems, was aroused by his vizier's glowing description of Zabag. "I have taken a fancy to see before me the head of the king of Zabag in a dish," boldly announced the Khmer king. This foolish remark soon reached the ears of the maharaja of Zabag, who got ready his fleet and arrived in front of Angkor Thom before the Khmers were even aware of impending danger. The Khmer king was captured and beheaded. Satisfied with this redress of insult, the maharaja of Zabag then returned to his own country. Later, however, he had the head washed and embalmed, and sent it as a little memento to the king then occupying the Khmer throne.

Sailendra supremacy was at last successfully challenged from another direction. The west coast of Malaya was temptingly accessible to the Cholas of south India, who had also developed a strong navy. In the opening years of the eleventh century the relations between these two great Asiatic naval powers were still

quite amicable. An interesting Chola inscription on twenty-one copperplates, engraved partly in Sanskrit and partly in Tamil, records that in A.D. 1005 the Chola king Rajaraja the Great made a grant of the revenues of a certain Chola village for the support of a Buddhist monastery built at Negapatam, near Madras, by the Sailendra king of Kataha. Rajaraja's son and successor broke off these friendly relations, however. He sent his fleet into Malayan waters, captured Kataha and took possession of many of its tributary states, including Sri Vijaya in Sumatra. Kataha soon regained its freedom, as is evident from another Chola inscription of the second half of the same century, which says that the Chola king, after reconquering Kataha, was pleased to give it back to its own king — a roundabout way of acknowledging that he was unable to maintain the Chola authority in Malaya. The Chola dream of colonial empire rapidly collapsed, and the contemporary Chinese were under the impression that the Chola king had actually become the vassal of the Sailendra ruler of Kataha. On this account, the all-important Chinese "board of rites" reached the solemn conclusion that it was good enough to write to the Chola king "on strong paper with an envelope of plain silk," instead of employing the silk-and-brocade stationery officially required for kings of first rank!

A long-drawn-out century of war between Hindu Cholas and Buddhist Sailendras ended in a mortal weakening of the Sailendras. Java had already managed to regain its freedom by the middle or end of the ninth century, and seized the opportunity of Sailendra difficulties to make conquests of large parts of southern Malaya. About the same time, the old Sumatran kingdom of Malayu, originally subdued by Sri Vijaya, once more came back to life, and not only wrested its independence back from its superlords the Sailendras but embarked on an aggressive policy of expansion in western Malaya. A Sailendra king of the thirteenth century, Chandrabhanu, finally undertook two ill-advised campaigns against Ceylon, losing his life in the second of them. With Malayu still pushing north and the Thais of

Siam now vigorously pushing south, the remnants of Sailendra power were crushed out of existence.

It is a strange coincidence that the most magnificent Hindu monument is found, not in India, but in Indo-China, and that the greatest Buddhist monument belongs to Java, not to India. The famous stupa of Borobudur lies in the Kedu plain of central Java. Though no dedicatory inscription has been found, and not a single reference to it occurs in the early Javanese records, Borobudur almost certainly dates from the latter half of the eighth century and was therefore built during the time when central Java formed part of the Sailendra Empire, or at least was ruled by kings of the Sailendra line.

Sailendra-Javanese genius produced several important Buddhist temples in central Java, apart from Borobudur, such as the Chandi Sevu and Chandi Plaosan groups, in the Prambanan Valley, and Chandi Mendut, in the Kedu plain. Sevu has a main sanctuary surrounded by 249 smaller temples. Inscriptions from Prambanan definitely associate the Sailendra kings with the erection of Buddhist temples and images in this region. The Kalasan inscription belongs to A.D. 778 and refers to an image of the goddess Tara and a temple and monastery built by a Sailendra king in honor of his religious preceptor. The image has disappeared, but the small finely carved stone temple still remains. The Kelurak inscription, of 782, records the dedication of an image of the Bodhisattva Manjusri by a royal priest from Gauda, or Bengal, who is described as having purified the Sailendra king "by the dust of his feet." Both inscriptions are engraved in a northern Indian alphabet.

The Sailendras evidently maintained close relations with Bengal. Further evidence is a copperplate grant from Nalanda, issued by Devapala (815-855), the most important king of the Pala Dynasty of Bengal and Bihar. Devapala granted a revenue of five villages for the perpetual upkeep of a monastery built at Nalanda by a Sailendra king named Balaputra. Borobudur itself, though like no other stupa anywhere else, has its nearest af-

finities with the great Pala temple and monastery of Paharpur in Bengal, the largest single monument in India.

The world-renowned Buddhist monument of Java is really a whole mountaintop carved into nine stone terraces, each of rising height and diminishing size, crowned by a simple stupa surmounted by an octagonal pinnacle. While the original structure was still in the early stages, it appears that the builders began to doubt whether the foundations would prove strong enough to bear the immense weight of the monument they contemplated. The base, including part of the carved plinth and the lowest terrace, was accordingly covered over by a broad stone embankment. The five terraces above this embankment are square in plan but with lacelike projections on the side, and the upper three are circular. From terrace to terrace, up the center of each side, are staircases with covered gateways. The square terraces all have balustrades, and there are four narrow galleries running around the four lower terraces. The outer sides of the balustrades contain niches with images of the Dhyani Buddhas — Akshobhya on the east, Ratnasambhava on the south, Amitabha on the west, Amogasiddha on the north. All the images in the niches of the fifth balustrade represent the fifth Dhyani Buddha, Vairochana. There are altogether 432 of these images. The three round terraces have bell-shaped latticed stupas along their rims, enshrining identical Buddha images. At the summit, rising from a lotus pedestal, is the stupa itself. It has no visible opening, but inside is a small round relic chamber, now empty.

Borobudur owes its real fame to the series of fifteen hundred sculptured panels in the four galleries of the lower terraces. The Buddhist texts they illustrate have now been fully identified, and all are found to represent popular Sanskrit Mahayana works from India. The reliefs on the buried basement plinth, which were clearly intended to form part of the general scheme of decoration, are derived from the *Karmavibhaga*, a well-known treatise on karma, or the law of reward and punishment, a Bud-

dhist work which exists in Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Tibetan and Kuchan versions. The main sources for the life and previous lives of the historical Buddha, illustrated in the reliefs of the first gallery, are two, the *Lalita-vistara* and Aryasura's *Jataka-mala*. The principal text of Borobudur, however, which was used for the whole series of sculptured panels in the second, third and fourth galleries, is the *Gandavyuha*. It recounts the story of the youth Sudhana, his 110 travels all over India in search of enlightenment, his final attainment of the quest, helped by Maitreya, the Future Buddha. The story of Sudhana was immensely popular with Buddhists from Nepal to Java, in this period.

The sculptured galleries of Borobudur were intended to be circumambulated in regular order, as the devotee ascended to the stupa at the top. On the lowest plane, he was to absorb the lesson of distinguishing good from evil. He would then feel the inspiration of the moving and noble example of the Buddha's own life. After this, mentally making the "great vow" of Renunciation, he would struggle to identify himself with Sudhana in his quest for spiritual knowledge. At last, with the divine help of the Bodhisattvas, he would reach the goal of Nirvana, symbolized by the stupa of the uppermost terrace.

The Borobudur bas-reliefs are so like the classic Gupta sculptures that some think the actual work must have been carried out by Indian artists. As in Indian sculpture, the same youthful princes and princesses in the same charming poses, the same chaste nudity, the same fervent spirit of adoration reappear at Borobudur, in faraway Java. But the Javanese sculpture is distinguished by a fine simplification, possibly a necessity imposed by the coarse volcanic stone, full of holes and granulations. Then, too, though theme and technique are unmistakably Indian, a Javanese atmosphere is created by the introduction of steeply gabled houses resting on heavy stakes, ships with outriggers, foliage, birds and animals, all typically Javanese.

After Java ceased to be a part of the Buddhist Sailendra Empire about the middle of the ninth century, the Hindu Dynasty

whose kings had formerly ruled over central Java regained power. Art and architecture, still dominated by Indian tradition, continued to flourish in central Java until the beginning of the tenth century. Small Javanese bronzes of Buddhist and Hindu deities belong to this period, and the great Hindu temple of Lara-Jongrang at Prambanan represents the last flowering of Indo-Javanese art in central Java. On a great paved terrace surrounded by rows of smaller shrines are eight large temples. The three principal ones are dedicated to the gods of the Hindu Trinity, Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, Shiva's temple occupying the central position. The balustrade of this temple is decorated with forty-two sculptured panels similar to those of Borobudur, but depicting the story of the *Ramayana* up to the point where the army of Rama enters Lanka. Apparently the narrative was continued and finished on the adjoining Brahma temple, but of these panels only broken fragments remain. Episodes from the life of Krishna formed the subject for the corresponding panels on the Vishnu temple. The *Ramayana* sculptures of Lara-Jongrang are strikingly vital and dramatic, superior in their plastic sense to the immense flat bas-reliefs of Angkor Wat, more like tapestry than sculpture.

At the beginning of the tenth century the political and cultural center of Java shifted eastward, and for the next five hundred years it was eastern Java that kept alight the culture and civilization transplanted from India. New kingdoms emerged, Jangala and Kadiri, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, respectively, Singhasari, in the thirteenth, Majapahit in the fourteenth. The eastern Javanese kings were either Hindus or Tantric Buddhists, if not votaries of both, like the Majapahit king Kritanagara, who assumed the title of Shiva-Buddha. Many Hindu temples were erected in eastern Java, but wars and devastating earthquakes have reduced them to a worse condition of ruin than the older monuments of central Java. Notable sculptures were also produced, including remarkable royal portrait

statues in which Javanese kings identified themselves with favorite deities, after the fashion of the Khmer kings.

Throughout the period of Indian influence in Javanese history, the literature of India supplied a constant inspiration. In the first and earliest period, Sanskrit works were brought over from India, and though no early Indian manuscripts have survived in Java, the temple sculptures are sufficient evidence that their contents were known. Javanese law codes, moreover, were borrowed directly from Indian law codes. Javanese society also acquired a caste structure resembling that of India, but less rigid. The next period was characterized by a brilliant outburst of literary activity associated mainly with the court of Kadiri, in eastern Java. Condensed versions of Indian works now appeared side by side with translations in Old-Javanese. These were followed by Javanese metrical poems with subjects selected from the Sanskrit epics and composed on the model of Sanskrit kavyas. The Indian heroes were transformed into national Javanese heroes, and to this day they are the chief characters in the traditional Javanese dance dramas and puppet plays, called *wayang*.

Not until the fourteenth century did Java begin to break away from its Indian traditions and strike out along independent lines of creative endeavor. Then, as the old Indian ideals gradually receded into the background, Indonesian elements, perhaps long artificially held in check, rose to the surface. The *Ramayana* in the fourteenth century was still an appropriate subject for temple sculpture in eastern Java, as the bas-reliefs at Panataran indicate. But these reliefs have lost all the dignity and beauty of the older series of *Ramayana* sculptures at Lara-Jongrang. The eastern Javanese figures are like fantastic *wayang* puppets cut out of leather. Faces and feet are shown only in profile, noses are grotesquely long. The spiritual meaning has been sacrificed for bizarre decorativeness.

Islam, at last, was becoming more than a cloud on the distant

horizon. Arab traders of the coastal colonies had intermarried with old royal families of Java, and Arab power was visibly on the increase. Malacca became the stronghold of Islam in Malayan waters, and from this position the conquest of Java was finally carried out during the first quarter of the sixteenth century. Some members of the royal family of Majapahit and many of the Javanese aristocracy escaped to the little island of Bali farther to the east, and here the last stand of the old Indo-Javanese type of culture was made. Bali successfully resisted the pressure of Islam for three centuries, and even retained its integrity when the Dutch occupied Indonesia in the nineteenth century. It was as late as 1908 that a Balinese chieftain, last heir, perhaps, of Majapahit, committed suicide with his wives and all his followers rather than render the final act of submission — a futile but mournful gesture of despairing courage. Indo-Javanese culture still lives in little Bali, in its dance and music and drama, in its temple rituals.

Indian civilization, spreading over the seas, bequeathed two great religions, a vast literature, well-defined artistic traditions and some of its peculiar social customs to other lands of Asia. One or the other of its religions took root and grew. Champa and Java ultimately selected Hinduism. Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Cambodia retained Buddhism. But the time was not far off when India herself was to succumb to Muslim invaders. In the Further East and Indonesia, Chinese as well as Arabs were watching events with keen eyes. When India was no longer able to maintain effective overseas connections with her ancient cultural colonies, it seemed for a brief period that southeastern Asia was destined to become part of the mighty Chinese empire of the Mings. The tide turned the other way. Malaya and Indonesia fell to Islam.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *Indian Culture Beyond the Mountains*

THE NORTHWESTERN FRONTIERS of India converge upon Afghanistan, Western Tibet and the two Turkistans — Russian and Chinese. Immense mountains separate India from Chinese Turkistan, or Sinkiang. Difficult passes lead over the Hindu Kush and by way of the famous "Iron Gates" to Samarkand, and so along the ancient caravan road to Kashgar. Still more difficult passes lead from Kashmir over the Pamirs and the Karakoram Mountains. These massive ranges firmly join the Kunlun, or "Tiger-Dragon Mountains," which form the inhospitable boundary between Tibet and Sinkiang. On the opposite side of Sinkiang, beyond the Taklamakan Desert sprawling out east to west more than a thousand miles, are other mighty mountain chains, the Altai and the Tien Shan, or "Celestial Mountains," beyond which lie the rolling grasslands of the Siberian Steppes. On its China, or Mongolia, side, the Taklamakan merges insensibly into the dismal Gobi, another vast stretch of sand and loess. Lifting itself spasmodically from time to time, like a heaving brown shroud, Gobi dust settles down at long last on the yellow-tiled roofs of distant Peking. Forbidding as the way thither seems, from whatever direction of approach, this now desiccated region of central Asia, inhabited solely by Turkish-speaking Muslims, was a thriving center of Buddhist culture for nine or ten centuries.

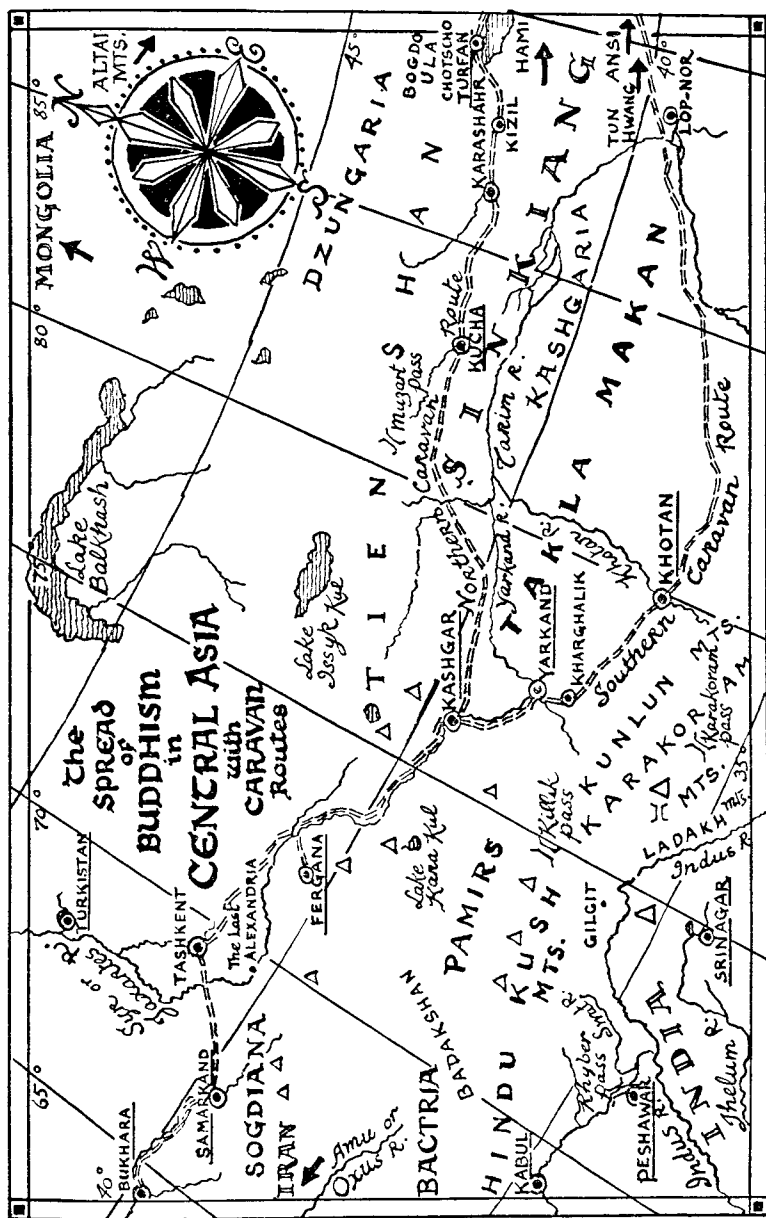
Down into the Tarim basin, a vague region known as Kashgaria, rivers carrying melted snow from the surrounding mountains create a belt of fertile land, though the fickle waters soon enough lose themselves in the salty marshes and sandy wastes of

the central desert. In places, long-dead poplars and willows bear silent testimony to a progressive drying up of the land over a wide area. Through the cultivated oases wind two old caravan roads, strung with halting places. Along the northern road are such ancient towns as Kucha, Turfan and Hami. Yarkand, Khotan and Tun-huang punctuate the southern road. Dividing at Kashgar, both roads meet again at Ansi, on the Chinese border, a thousand miles to the east. Less well-defined tracks here and there crisscross the desert, linking northern and southern oases, but the hardy traveler who dares to choose one of these waterless paths must pick his way by bleached bones of animals or men.

Present-day Sinkiang is still nominally ruled by Chinese provincial officials. Sinkiang of tomorrow seems destined to pass under the control of Soviet Russia. In the past, however, many tribes and races sojourned here at different times. Mongol, Tibetan and Turkish nomads coveted the oases as pastures for their great herds of horses, sheep and goats.

The oases came within the political sphere of the Celestial Empire during the Han and Tang periods. The Kushans and the White Huns fought resounding battles in Kashgaria. About the middle of the eighth century, the Uigurs, then perhaps the most civilized of the Turkish tribes roaming about Asia, slipped into some of the northern settlements. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Jenghis Khan bore down upon them.

In spite of their checkered history, there was always a settled population in the oases. It is a strange discovery of the twentieth century that some of the early inhabitants were Indo-Europeans, speaking three or four Indo-European languages or dialects — varieties of Tokharian in the northern oases, Sogdian and another eastern Iranian dialect in the southern settlements. Under aristocratic dynasties of their own, in spite of temporary overlordships, the oases settlements generally managed to retain their integrity as more or less independent and separate little kingdoms. If they were at times made to send annual tribute



of horses, borax, jade or felt to the Chinese imperial court at Loyang (Honan-fu) or Chang-an (Sian-fu), what did it matter? The Great Wall of China extended a full three hundred miles out into the desert. It was planted at strategic intervals with Chinese military posts, who saw that the famous Silk Road was kept open. Long camel caravans continuously passed westward, laden with the precious silks of China. Long camel caravans, led by rough Sogdians, plodded eastward, with products from Bactria, India and Iran, perhaps even from Roman Syria. The central Asian oases profited greatly by the two-way trade. Most of the settlements, as a matter of fact, owed their existence to the epochal discovery by General Chang Kien, in about 130 B.C. of a possible overland route between China and the West.

The first European actually to travel the ancient Silk Road was that prince of medieval wanderers, Marco Polo. But Marco Polo's eyes were roving in search of the mythical Christian king of Asia, Prester John, about whom Europe in the thirteenth century was naïvely agog. He had probably never heard of Buddhism, and ruined stupas and old remains meant nothing to him. His notes on central Asia are disappointingly dry. It was not until the last decade of the nineteenth century that accidental discoveries of minor antiquities and some birch-bark leaves of mysterious ancient manuscripts drew attention to the desert oases. A rush of expeditions followed, Russian, German, French, English, Japanese and, last of all, Chinese. Numerous sand-buried sites of central Asia were located and explored. The dry climate and shifting sands of central Asia repeat conditions in Egypt, and it is because of them that ancient treasures were found to have been wonderfully preserved. When all of the tangled evidence was sorted out, another chapter of history was written.

Once again it was found that in forgotten centuries of the past the civilizing influences of India had spread over this entire region. The court life, the dress, were mainly Iranian. The commercial life was controlled by China. But religion, art and learn-

ing in the oases kingdoms of central Asia were predominantly Indian in origin.

The birch-bark and palm-leaf manuscripts of Khotan and Kucha, which had originally set off the archaeological investigations, were found to be written in Indian languages and scripts, the first belonging to the second century A.D., the second to the fourth. The Khotan manuscript is the end portion of a Prakrit version in Kharoshthi writing of the well-known Buddhist *Dhammapada*, or anthology of sayings of the Buddha, which forms part of the sacred Buddhist Canon. By a strange coincidence, the first portion of the same manuscript was afterwards found and taken to Russia. Previously known only in Pali and Sanskrit versions, this Prakrit copy of the *Dhammapada* came as a complete surprise to scholars. It was the first Buddhist work ever discovered in the Kharoshthi writing of northwest India. The Kucha manuscript, now generally known as the Bower MS. because it was acquired from a local finder by Lieutenant Bower, then passing through Kucha, is a medical treatise in Sanskrit verse with a few Prakrit passages introduced. Complete in seven parts, it contains abstracts of ancient Indian medical works and a number of direct quotations from Indian authors including twenty-eight extracts from Charaka and six from Susruta. It also gives a charm against snakebite which the Jatakas say was pronounced by the Buddha himself on the occasion when a monk chopping wood in the Jetavana Garden at Sravasti was bitten by a cobra.

India possesses no manuscripts going back earlier than the tenth or eleventh century, and it was long supposed that the oldest Sanskrit manuscript in existence was a fragment taken from China to Japan in the seventh century and since carefully preserved at the Buddhist temple of Horyuji, in Nara. It is easy to understand the excitement following the central Asian finds of ancient Indian manuscripts.

The international competitors were soon reaping a harvest far exceeding their expectation. Incredible numbers of written

documents, in many languages and scripts, on birch bark, palm leaves, bamboo tablets, wood, leather, silk and paper were recovered from ruined stupas and shrines, from floors and basements of buried wood-and-wattle houses, from ancient rubbish heaps left in the open, from grave pits and from the old Chinese military stations posted along the desert extension of the Great Wall. Wood-block prints and beautiful paintings came to light, and in deserted cave monasteries splendid Buddhist frescoes were discovered. Thousands of sculptures, most of them of stucco, clay or wood, were dug from ruined sites. Architectural carvings, fragments of textiles such as figured silks and brocades, remnants of woolen carpets, little embroidered shoes, lacquered furniture, engraved seals, coins and glassware — even little funeral cakes in a variety of designs and patterns, dried to a perfect state of preservation — were collected and sent on their way to the great museums, to testify to the high degree of civilization enjoyed by the inhabitants of the oases of central Asia hundreds of years ago.

No doubt the most exciting discovery belonged to the veteran explorer Sir Aurel Stein. Eight miles from Tun-huang at the eastern end of the Taklamakan Desert an important group of 182 frescoed caves, now popularly known as the "Caves of the Thousand Buddhas," had been discovered a little earlier by Russian archaeologists. A Chinese stone inscription gave the consecration date of the monastery as A.D. 366. Sir Aurel Stein had once previously visited the place, but during a second visit in 1908 he learned that a pious Taoist recluse who had taken up his habitation in the deserted caves had come upon a secret chamber cut out from the solid wall of one of the larger halls. This chamber was said to contain a deposit of old manuscripts. With some difficulty, the man was persuaded to reveal the spot, and Sir Aurel Stein was shown the hiding place into which for safekeeping, probably on the approach of some wild, destructive enemy, the Tun-huang monks of nine hundred years ago had hastily thrust the manuscripts and religious paintings of the

monastery. Having concealed the opening by mud plaster with a painted decoration, the monks had then fled away, never to return. The old library was completely forgotten until its chance rediscovery in the present century.

Here, if ever, was the archaeologist's dream come true. It took three weeks merely to make a rough list of the contents of the wonderful chamber — more than 20,000 manuscripts and documents, 554 separate paintings! Of the manuscripts, 9000 were in Chinese, about the same number in Tibetan, 3000 more in Sanskrit or in the central Asian varieties of Brahmi, in which Kuchan and Khotanese were written, and the rest were in Sogdian, Uigur and Turkish. The collection contained 500 complete Buddhist canonical works as well as varied assortments of geographical, historical and literary fragments, and sheaves of monastic accounts and records. In general, the material covered the period from the fifth to the end of the tenth centuries, the greater part belonging to the seventh and eighth centuries.

Ruined sites elsewhere in the oases gave up quantities of manuscripts. Among them were Sanskrit originals and translations of long-lost Buddhist works. A unique find from Turfan consisted of the fragments of three ancient Buddhist dramas, written in Sanskrit characters of about the second century A.D. At least one of them contained the name of Asvaghosa as its author. Almost within his own lifetime, it appears, the work of this famous Mahayanist poet of India, the ornament in about A.D. 100 of Kanishka's capital Peshawar, had traveled far out into central Asia.

A good many of the documents from central Asia are secular ones in Prakrit, written in the Kharoshthi script in use in north-west India from the time of Asoka to the end of the Kushan period. Kharoshthi was employed as late as the fifth century in central Asia, where it was in general use for administrative and business purposes. The documents mainly consist of official or semiofficial orders, deeds, bonds or letters. A great many of them are written in ink on wooden tablets, but some are also

written on leather. Hundreds of these inscribed wooden tablets have turned up. They are wedge-shaped, rectangular or oblong, and range in size from seven inches or so to seven and a half feet. Often they have been found in pairs, the name and address on the upper half, or cover, which was originally held in place by a string and clay seal.

The earliest of the Chinese records, which are in the nature of orders for troop movements or lists of military supplies and accounts, date back to the first and second century B.C., in Han times. These are the oldest documents so far picked up in central Asia. They are written on small tablets of bamboo. The next earliest are on silk, and later ones are on coarse, primitive paper, which the Chinese first produced at the beginning of the second century A.D. Fortunately, the Chinese adopted the custom of dating their records, and these dates, supplemented by Chinese coins accidentally dropped by the wayside or sometimes offered before images in shrines, have often helped to determine the chronology of finds associated with them in ancient sites.

An extraordinary literary and artistic activity seems to have found an outlet for itself in the little oases kingdoms of central Asia during the opening centuries of this era. It was given its main direction by the polyglot Buddhist monks — Indian, Kuchan, Sogdian and others — who crowded into the central Asian monasteries by tens of thousands. The most pressing task confronting these new converts was to get hold of proper texts, and they were only to be had by laborious copying and still more laborious translation. The monasteries in consequence turned themselves into hives of industrious scholarship.

In the year 2 B.C., the first Buddhist text was brought to China by a Chinese ambassador returning from a mission to the Yue-chi, or Kuchan court. Several decades passed, and then Ming-ti, emperor of China in the Later Han Dynasty, had his famous dream, in A.D. 65. He saw a vision of a Golden Person, standing in the West. Buddha, said the interpreters! Ming-ti sent out emissaries in search of teachers, and they persuaded two Indian Bud-

dhist monks to return with them from Khotan. The names of these monks have been preserved. They were Kasyapa Matanga and Gobharana. They arrived at Loyang leading a white horse loaded with manuscripts and images. So Ming-ti built the "White Horse Monastery" for them, and Matanga translated the "Forty-two Sayings of the Buddha." This text has survived, the oldest of all Chinese Buddhist texts.

Monks from central Asia were soon going to China in ever-increasing numbers. Several Kuchan, Parthian and Sogdian Buddhist monks who visited China in the second century A.D. and made some of the earliest Chinese translations are known by name. One of them was Dharmaraksha, a Kuchan monk who had gone to Tun-huang and settled there, and who is said to have known thirty-six languages. He went to China in the year 284 and remained for thirty years. During this time he translated some two hundred Sanskrit texts into Chinese, and ninety of his translations have been preserved.

Another well-known translator was Kumarajiva, who lived between 344 and 413. Kumarajiva was the son of an Indian minister of Kucha and the daughter of the Kuchan king. The Kucha Dynasty cherished a tradition of descent from Kunala, Asoka's son. According to this tradition, Kunala was not blinded at his stepmother's order, according to the usual Buddhist tradition, but was banished to Kucha. He converted the people of Kucha to Buddhism of the Lesser Vehicle. As a young man, Kumarajiva went to Kashmir, where he became a monk and a brilliant Sanskrit scholar. At the age of twenty he returned to Kucha, where a prince from Yarkand suddenly converted him to Mahayana Buddhism. After this he devoted himself to making translations into Kuchan of the principal Mahayanist writings. After some time, he was carried off as a prize prisoner to northern China with a retreating Chinese army. Nothing daunted at the turn of his fate, he at once began to study Chinese, and within ten years he had translated many texts into Chinese, among them the *Saddharma-pundarikā*, or "Lotus of the True

Law," destined to become the chief text of Mahayana Buddhism throughout the Far East.

It was not enough, however, for monks of central Asia to go to China. Chinese monks also began to feel an irresistible urge to visit India. The first of these Chinese monks got himself as far as Khotan in A.D. 259. It is to our old friends Fa Hian and Yuan Chwang that we owe invaluable accounts of life in the oasis kingdoms of central Asia under their Buddhist kings in the fifth and seventh centuries.

Fa Hian, a true pioneer, took careful note of the kind of Buddhism and the numbers of monks to be found in the different localities he visited in the year A.D. 400. The record of his travels includes these items of information: Lop-nor, "some four thousand and more priests, all belonging to the Lesser Vehicle"; Kara-shahr, "over four thousand, all belonging to the Lesser Vehicle"; Khotan, "several tens of thousands, most of them belonging to the Greater Vehicle"; Karghalik, "more than one thousand priests, mostly belonging to the Lesser Vehicle"; Kashgar, "over one thousand priests, all belonging to the Lesser Vehicle." His attention was directed to such matters as monastic discipline, the piety of laymen, the great Buddhist festivals he witnessed, the religious music he listened to. He stayed for a time at the Gomati monastery, chief of the fourteen monasteries then existing in Khotan. The correct behavior of its three thousand resident monks particularly impressed him. "When they enter the refectory, their demeanor is grave and ceremonious; they sit down in regular order; they all keep silence; they make no clatter with bowls; and for the attendants to serve more food, they do not call out to them, but only make signs with their hands." West of the town was another monastery which still went by the name of the King's New Monastery, though it had been built over a period of eighty years during the reigns of three previous kings. Its central pagoda was 250 feet high, and Fa Hian found this whole monastery a marvel of carving and gilded woodwork. Was the New Monastery, perhaps, the imposing

stupa, closely resembling descriptions of the famous Kanishka stupa of Peshawar, which modern explorers have discovered at Rawak not far from Khotan? Even ordinary people at Khotan, says Fa Hian, all had their private pagodas — “the smallest of which would be about twenty feet in height.”

Fa Hian arrived in Khotan in the spring, and the great annual Buddhist festival of image-cars was just about to take place. He remained to witness it. On successive days, each of the fourteen monasteries of Khotan formed its own procession, with its own towering image-car. Proceeding from a point a mile outside the town to the main gate, the processions were met by the king, walking bareheaded and barefoot, scattering flowers and burning incense. As the images were carried into the city, a rain of flowers fell on them from the top of the city gate, where a special pavilion accommodated the ladies of the Khotanese court. At Kashgar, too, Fa Hian was able to witness the traditional five-year assembly for the distribution of royal arms, originally introduced by Asoka. At the invitation of the king, monks had collected together “like clouds.”

When Yuan Chwang set out two and a quarter centuries later to travel the same road as Fa Hian, the two-way journeys of monks across Asia had swelled to a considerable volume. By this time Buddhism had already received recognition throughout the Far East. Under the Northern Wei Dynasty, it had been made the State religion of northern China in A.D. 453. The Weis, who were of Tatar origin, had been converted to Buddhism before they conquered China, and it was in the monastic cave monastery of Yung-kang, their earliest capital inside the Great Wall, that Chinese Buddhist sculpture was born. This sculpture was a direct imitation of the Kushan Greco-Buddhist art of Bactria and Gandhara, passed on to northern China through central Asia.

During the fifth century, Buddhism had also come into singular favor in southern China under the Liang Dynasty. It was towards the close of this century that the Indian royal monk Bodhidharma, coming by the sea route from India, is supposed

to have reached Canton. He was the real founder of the powerful Dhyana sect of Buddhism, afterwards known as Chan in China and Zen in Japan. Picturesque legends about Bodhidharma make up for historical vagueness surrounding his figure. He was blunt, rough and rude, a scant respecter of persons. For nine years he shut himself up in a mountain retreat in southern China and practised Dhyana. Popularly called "wall-gazing," this was really a strenuous form of mind-concentration, the purpose of which was to realize nothing less than one's own Buddhature. At last he opened his mouth. "I have come to teach you only that Buddha is thought," he said. "I have no interest in rules, nor ascetic practices, nor miraculous powers, nor mere placid sitting in meditation." Weary of the cold proprieties of Confucianism and the Quietist doctrine of Taoism which too easily degenerated into "do-nothingness," more and more Chinese began to abandon the world and flock into Buddhist monasteries.

As early as A.D. 372, Chinese Buddhist monks had gone on to Korea, and Buddhism was formally recognized in the Silla kingdom of Korea in A.D. 528. From Korea, it made its official entry into Japan in 538, the year in which the Korean king of Pekche sent copies of Buddhist scriptures, Buddhist banners and a beautiful Buddhist image to the Japanese ruler, with the following earnest message: "This teaching is the most excellent of all teachings; it brings endless and immeasurable blessings to all believers, even unto the attainment of the Enlightenment without comparison. Moreover, it has come to Korea from the far-off India, and the people of the countries lying between are now zealous followers of it, and none is outside the pale." When a Japanese constitution was issued by the prince regent Shotoku in 604, it declared that henceforth faith in the Three Treasures of the Buddhist religion should be the foundation of national and individual life in Japan. Indian missionaries were landing on the shores of Japan a century later.

The political turmoil which tore China asunder for two cen-

turies finally came to an end with the great Tang period (618-907), but now it appeared for a time that the new popularity of Buddhism might lead to further troubles. The old Confucian scholar Fu I, bitterly hostile to Buddhism, which he believed was rapidly undermining the loyalty of subjects for their emperor and the filial piety of children for their parents, composed a memorial for the throne in which he pointed out the insidious danger threatening the State. "This sect numbers at the present time more than a hundred thousand monks and as many nuns, who live in celibacy. It would be to the interest of the State to oblige them to marry one another. They would then form one hundred thousand families, and would provide subjects to swell the numbers of the armies for the coming wars." When Tai Tsung became emperor in 626, he took the old minister's advice to heart. "Emperor Liang Wu-ti preached Buddhism so successfully to his officers that they were unable to mount their horses to defend him against the rebels," he remarked one day. So saying, he passed a decree breaking up the religious orders and ruling that only one monastery should be permitted in a city, except three in the capital, Chang-an.

It was just three years later that Yuan Chwang petitioned the emperor to be allowed to go to India to find out the truth among all the conflicting Buddhist doctrines and sects. It is not surprising that Tai Tsung refused his permission, but Yuan Chwang went anyway, and his perseverance, intelligence and character, more than anything else, ultimately changed the mind and heart of Tai Tsung. After Yuan Chwang's return from India, it was the emperor himself who, "taking up his divine pen," wrote a preface to Yuan Chwang's scholarly translation of the Yogachara texts, based on the teachings of the brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu.

Yuan Chwang, riding alone across Asia on his way to India in the early part of the seventh century, was profoundly impressed by the piety of the people, the atmosphere of overwhelming seriousness pervading the monasteries and the strange

blends he met with of three different types of civilization, Indian, Iranian and Chinese, to which new converts from the nomad barbarian fringe surrounding the settled oases had also made their own contributions. The flattering but embarrassing eagerness to receive spiritual instruction on the part of the pious king of Turfan almost ended Yuan Chwang's journey before it began. The Chinese Master of the Law arrived at Turfan after dark, but the king was waiting to welcome him and kept him talking the rest of the night. He then decided that for the benefit of himself and the Buddhist community Yuan Chwang must remain at Turfan. In vain did the Master of the Law explain the purpose for which he had set out on his long and difficult journey. "The king will only be able to keep my bones, he has no power over my spirit or will," he insisted resolutely. When all argument failed, he went on a hunger strike. After three days, the penitent king at last gave him permission to depart. This attitude was typical of Buddhist kings and princes in the oases, and it was through their ardent faith and generosity that great monasteries were built and thousands of monks received support.

Yuan Chwang, already when he set out from China a follower of the Mahayanist school of the Yogachara, deeply regretted that Hinayanists of central Asia remained unconverted. At Kucha, he found himself drawn into an acrimonious quarrel with the venerable Mokshagupta, head of five thousand Hinayanist monks in residence there. "Commonplace and superficial," sharply remarked Yuan Chwang of the texts quoted by Mokshagupta. "Erroneous and contrary to the precepts of Sakyamuni!" hotly retorted Mokshagupta of Yuan Chwang's Yogachara texts. "Do you not fear to be hurled into a bottomless abyss?" Yuan Chwang demanded sternly.

Beyond Kucha, Yuan Chwang passed through territory which had recently come into the control of the Western Turks. Fortunately, his kind patron the king of Turfan had given him a letter for the Turkish khan and a handsome present of five hundred

pieces of silk to hand over. The khan, who was then at his winter encampment near a lake north of the Tien Shan, invited the Master of the Law to a great feast. Dishes piled high with mutton and endless cups of raisin wine were passed among the guests, to the accompaniment of clashing music. Yuan Chwang, seated on an iron chair, was served with his own special food. When the drinking bout was at its height, the khan requested the Master of the Law to expound the Buddhist doctrine. Slightly disconcerted, Yuan Chwang did his best to comply. When the discourse ended, the khan prostrated himself at the Master's feet declaring that he had received the teaching with faith. But he, too, wished to keep Yuan Chwang by his side. "You must not go to India," he insisted. "It is such a hot country I fear your face might melt when you arrive there!" Shortly after Yuan Chwang's visit, the Turkish khan was assassinated. Had this event not taken place, the whole subsequent history of central Asia might possibly have taken a course different from the one it did.

The Turks were soon galloping in all directions. None of their leaders now cared to listen to Buddhist doctrines of peace. The little armies of the oases, Tang horsemen from China, wild Tibetan soldiery, the nomad Turks, met and slaughtered one another without mercy. The caravan roads were blocked, and Chinese pilgrims to India had to brave the unknown hazards of the sea rather than the certain dangers of the overland route. Buddhist central Asia could not withstand the shock of the Turkish pressure and Muslim central Asia gradually took its place. Yet the dream and the vision were unquenchably Buddhist.

From the frescoed walls of rock sanctuaries, from the tattered votive banners, from the broken clay friezes, the meditative Buddhas and merciful Bodhisattvas continued to gaze unmoved upon the change which was overtaking the world around them. Did they not always know, had they not always preached from the beginning, that change is inherent in the nature of

things? Fresh and beautiful still, after a thousand years of neglect, these wall paintings of central Asia reflect the undying spirit of faith and devotion which illuminated the age of their creation.

The Buddhist art of central Asia descends lineally from Gandharan art, but it soon developed its own geographical modifications. At early sites, such as Rawak, Niya and Miran in the southern part of the desert, Greco-Roman influences prevailed up to the end of the third century A.D. Elements of Gandharan influence survived longer in the art of some of the northern oases, such as Tumshuk. All over central Asia, right up through the ninth century, innumerable little heads and masks of monks, barbarians, Yakshas and mysteriously smiling godlings were being turned out from moulds, exactly like those which were produced in the workshops of Hadda, Taxila and Kashmir in the post-Kuchan period.

From the sixth century, however, a new wave, of purely Gupta inspiration, reached central Asia. The figures grow more slender, their poses are more graceful, their draperies more transparent. Heavenly and earthly Buddhas cool their feet on beautiful Indian lotuses, symbol of purity. Little genii, with fluttering scarves, float above their haloed heads, rejoicing that the drum of salvation has sounded. It is as if the artists had all gone to school at Ajanta, though the general formality of the compositions in central Asia never permitted quite the same exuberant naturalism.

Humbly taking their place at the foot of the painted panels, below the celestials, monks and lay worshippers and royal donors advance with hands folded in adoration or bearing flowers and gifts. In the delineation of these human beings, one sees the actual society of the little Asian courts and cities passing in review, much as Yuan Chwang must have seen it in the seventh century. In the monasteries of the Kucha oases, the "Thousand Caves" of Kizil or the grottoes of Karashahr or Kumtura, processions of donors march past. Here are elegant little Iranian

knights, armed with long swords or daggers, wearing knee boots and soft-colored, belted tunics with the typical Kuchan lapel turned well back on the right side. Near them are equally elegant ladies in flowing skirts and tight bodices, besprigged with embroidery. The bell-shaped sleeves overhang undersleeves of charmingly contrasted colors.

Nearer China, at Bazaklik, in the region of Turfan, or at Tunhuang, the donors change to sedate Tang mandarins and thickly swathed ladies with ponderous headdresses, who observe an impeccable Confucian decorum for all their Buddhist piety, aristocratically concealing their hands within yard-long sleeves. Sometimes, too, one catches sight of bearded Sogdian merchants in fur caps on the wall of a cave. They have dismounted from their camels and left their caravans for a moment, in order to offer homage before a painted Buddha. Even Uigur Turkish donors appear in certain frescoes of the ninth century. Moving eastward, the traveler notes the steady increase of influences derived from Tang China, especially in background details. Billowy clouds like tufts of cotton, precipitous rocks and mountains veiled in mist, vertical waterfalls and winged pavilions, to be seen in these desert paintings, will before long become separated from their purely Buddhist associations and develop into the great masterly landscapes of the Sung period — surely the greatest landscape art the world has ever seen.

Within India's outer ring, their borders joining those of India over long stretches, lie two more countries which were destined to receive the impress of Indian culture, Nepal and Tibet. Elsewhere, the record is too often one of dead ashes or dying embers. Here, fortunately, the Indian inheritance still lives.

Nepal, roughly five hundred miles long in an east-west direction and one hundred miles from north to south, takes a bite out of northern India between Kashmir and Bengal. It tilts sharply, from the low-lying Tarai of the Indian frontier up the mighty backbone of the main Himalayan range, with peaks soaring above twenty-five thousand feet. Nepal is half owner with Tibet

of Everest. Encompassing Nepal on the north is Tibet, which touches Assam on the east and Kashmir and the United Provinces of India on the west.

The civilization of Nepal has been strongly influenced by both India and Tibet, and to some extent by China also, but the religion, art and literature of Nepal, and the language and customs of its present ruling class, are of Indian origin. Tibet, likewise, reflects influences radiating from all its immediate neighbors, including Mongolia. Though so near India, it was actually the last great country of Asia to accept its share of the Indian inheritance. Cut off by mountain barriers, it is isolated above all by the intense cold and height of its great plateau averaging sixteen thousand feet — discouraging obstacles for most travelers, especially those from a hot country like India. Not until the seventh century, almost one hundred years after Buddhism had reached Japan, did influences from India begin to penetrate Tibet as a result of the marriage of the Tibetan king, Srong-stan-Gampo, with an enlightened Buddhist princess of Nepal.

The modern village of Rummindei, fourteen miles inside the present border of Nepal, is the ancient Lumbini. The site is marked by a pillar bearing an inscription of Asoka's time, which says that in the twentieth year after his consecration Asoka came in person and did worship at this place "because here the Sakya sage, Buddha, was born." The taxes of Lumbini were canceled or reduced by reason of this fortunate circumstance. Borders are fluctuating affairs, and it is not of particular importance whether Nepal formed an integral part of Asoka's empire or not. Several of the ancient clans or tribes who figure in the history of this ancient period, such as the Sakyas, the Lichavis and the Mallas, were certainly borderland people, and their ideas and customs were probably perfectly familiar to the people in the Valley of Nepal as early as the time of Gotama Buddha himself. These ideas had less than a hundred miles to travel from India. Tradition says that Buddhism was introduced into Nepal by Asoka,

who continued his journey into Nepal from Lumbini, accompanied by his daughter Charumati and his son-in-law Devapala, and founded the city of Patan a mile from Kathmandu. He also built many stupas and monasteries in Nepal. Four ancient stupas of Patan, attributed to Asoka, are typically Mauryan in style, and others in Nepal have an archaic simplicity which betokens great antiquity.

Nepal is named in the fourth-century Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta as one of the then existing frontier states whose king "gratified his imperious commands by paying all kinds of taxes, obeying his orders and coming to do homage." Gupta political control seems to have lain lightly on Nepal, but Nepalese territory directly joined ancient Magadha, and Nepal inevitably succumbed to Gupta prestige in the matter of enlightened civilization. Intermarriages took place across the border, and dynasties tracing their descent from India held sway at Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. The two old Indian eras, Samvat (beginning 57 B.C.) and Saka (beginning A.D. 78) were both adopted by Nepal and are still in use there, though a Nepalese Samvat Era also originated in A.D. 880. A steady stream of religious teachers, scholars and artists began moving back and forth between Bihar and Nepal, and Nepal reacted sensitively to all the principal currents of ideas felt in India. Vasubandhu, the great teacher of Mahayana Buddhism, is said to have gone to Nepal, with the conventional 500 followers, to preach the Greater Vehicle. So effective were his labors, or at any rate those of Indian missionaries of his time, that Nepal then and there enthusiastically adopted the Greater Vehicle, with all its Dhyani Buddhas, its multiple Bodhisattvas and its Taras, or female Buddhist divinities. Again moving with India, Nepal opened itself to the Tantric doctrines which spread in all directions from Bengal in the eighth and ninth centuries, and Hinduism also began to count its converts in Nepal.

With the first Muslim invasions of northern India in the eleventh century, an exodus of Brahmins occurred. Taking

their Sanskrit manuscripts with them, they fled to Nepal, in order to preserve their religion and their caste orthodoxy intact, in face of threatened contamination. They seem to have encountered no difficulty in settling down in Nepal. Tantric Buddhism, with its emphasis on Sakti worship, had already established a bridge between the two great ancient Indian religions, and Hindu cults and sects were now flourishing side by side with Buddhist sects. The arrival of Rajput refugees, also fleeing from the Muslim conquerors, greatly strengthened the trend towards Hinduism in Nepal.

One of them could scarcely be called a refugee. Driven from his own territory of Simraam at the beginning of the fourteenth century by Tughlak Shah of Delhi, Harisinha-Deva managed to conquer a good part of Nepal. The dynasty he founded did not last long, and a descendant of the Malla line of kings, who had been reigning in the previous century, once more came back into power. The seventh king of this new Malla Dynasty is entitled to be remembered chiefly because of the part he played in codifying the laws of Nepal and in persuading the Newars, the most important inhabitants of central Nepal, to adopt many of the rules and regulations of the Hindu caste system, in spite of the fact that the Newars were still nominally Buddhist. Branches of the Malla line continued to rule at the three adjacent capitals of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, in the little Valley of Nepal, until the Gurkhas conquered Nepal less than two hundred years ago.

The Gurkhas claim descent from the Rajputs of Rajputana. Escaping from the Muslims, some of these Rajputs made their way to the hilly tracts of Kumaon and entered Nepal from the west. In the early part of the sixteenth century they conquered the little Nepalese state of Gurkha and henceforth called themselves Gurkhas. Slowly they began to expand eastward, until they reached the central Valley of Nepal, and in 1769 they finally established their authority over the whole country. The Gurkhas

represent a mixture of Rajputs, hill Brahmins and Tibeto-Mongolians, with the latter predominating, but are now looked upon as a distinct racial group. Their language, known as Khas, is a Rajasthani dialect of Sanskritic origin, naturally influenced by the Tibeto-Burman languages generally spoken in Nepal. The Gurkhas themselves observe the rules and practices of a Hindu caste, and under the dynasty founded by them Hinduism became the state religion in Nepal.

Nepal very deliberately chose to shut out Europe when Pritivi Narain Sah, founder of the Gurkha Dynasty, expelled the first little groups of Capuchin and Augustinian missionaries who had reached the country, and the policy of exclusion has ever since been maintained. Perhaps this explains the survival in Nepal of the essentially Indian outlook, the wholly satisfying artistic fusion of Indian and Nepalese culture.

It is in the little central Valley of Nepal, fifteen to twenty miles long and ten miles broad, with its three old capitals lying within a radius of only seven miles of one another, that India's religious and artistic influence upon Nepal is felt most strongly. The valley itself boasts very nearly three thousand temples and shrines. Apart from a few stupas, most of its sanctuaries belong to the late medieval period of the Malla rajas. Some of its religious centers have come to be regarded as sacred places of pilgrimage for Tibetans and Indians, as well as Nepalese. Bodhnath, for example, is a Buddhist stupa especially venerated by Tibetans, who have somehow acquired the privilege of keeping it in annual repair. Almost equally holy is Svayambhunath, crowning a high hill above Kathmandu. Like Bodhnath, it consists of a plain rough whitewashed stupa, possibly dating back to Asoka's time. It is topped by a later addition of a square stone tower, surmounted by thirteen broad metal rings tapering into a finial. On the four sides of the stone tower pairs of large mysterious eyes are painted, in red, black and white. They are the eyes of the Adi-Buddha, or Primordial Buddha — the self-existing, all-

seeing, all-knowing deity of Mahayana Buddhism. Numbers of small stupas, shrines and temples crowd the plateau around the main shrine.

Most famous of all the Hindu places of pilgrimage is Pashupatinath, where Shiva reigns supreme. This is a temple city spread out along the Bhagmati River, like a miniature Benares. Innumerable shrines and temples and pilgrims' hostels jostle one another along the ghats. To live at Pashupatinath, say the Hindus of Nepal, brings virtue, as to die there insures eternal bliss.

The Buddhist-Hindu Newars of Nepal are the chief artisans and craftsmen, as well as traders, of the country. The Gurkhas possess outstanding soldierly virtues, and it is on this account that Nepal, by special treaty arrangement, has for more than a century been a fertile recruiting ground for the army in India. But it is the Newars who have been largely responsible for the artistic achievements in building and image-making for which Nepal is famous. Like the Kashmiris, the Newars seem to be born craftsmen. They developed two characteristic types of religious architecture in Nepal, used indiscriminately for both Buddhist and Hindu sanctuaries. One is the Indian stone temple type, with a massive tower above a comparatively small shrine. The other is the multiple-roofed pagoda, associated particularly with China, though its origin is still obscure. Nepalese pagodas are largely of wood, but have roofs of copper. Four different materials are usually found in combination in nearly all Nepalese temples. Stone forms the base, red brick the main building material, elaborately carved and painted woodwork the interior, and exquisite metal casings and inset plaques of beaten copper, in high and low relief, are used for doorframes and lintels and decorative touches on the exterior. The three cities of the valley, with neatly paved squares, picturesque temples and palaces, and three- and four-storied houses from which projecting, ornately carved balcony windows somehow suggest Ajanta, have a delightfully medieval and old-world look.

Pala art traditions transposed themselves bodily from Bengal and Bihar to Nepal in the ninth and tenth centuries, and dictated the conventional types of Nepalese religious images, painted banners, illustrated manuscripts and decorated wooden covers of manuscript boxes. But there is a fine tradition of the metalworker's art which gives special distinction to Nepalese temple images. Also characteristically Nepalese are the tall stone pillars with lotus pedestals supporting portrait statues of Nepalese kings kneeling in devotion or the familiar symbols of the old Indian deities, such as the Rat of Ganesh or the Discus or Shell of Vishnu, made of stone, brass, copper or bronze, placed in all the Durbar squares and close to all the temples. In the field of the applied arts, such objects as metal bells, lamps, incense burners, water vessels, copper pennants simulating silk, and chased metal streamers descending in long ripples from temple pinnacles, are an instinctive creation of the Newar craftsmen.

Tibet, Land of Snow, is still largely a Land of Mystery. The rest of the world vaguely knows that the Grand Lama of Tibet rules autocratically, that a fifth of the male population lives in great fortresslike monasteries rising tier on tier up bleak mountainsides. Beyond this, is a great blank. Now and then, strange tales are told of holy men in caves who never grow old. A picture arises in the mind of pigtailed Tibetans endlessly chanting *Om Mani Padma Hum*, meaninglessly translated as "Hail, Jewel in the Lotus," and twirling curious prayer wheels on sticks. How to condense into an English formula the sacred Tibetan invocation to the compassionate Avalokitesvara? The lotus is, of course, the sacred Buddhist symbol for the pure essence of Buddhist teaching. The jewel in its heart is the salvation obtainable through knowledge.

Ignorance about Tibet is more than excusable. Tibetan works are hard to find, and few have been translated. In the past, armies from Mongolia, China and Nepal have at different times invaded and conquered Tibetan provinces, but even histor-

ical references have to be deciphered from obscure footnotes.

The period of Tibetan history with which India is closely connected extends from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries. Before the seventh century, the great valley of the Tsang-po, known in India as the Brahmaputra, occupying the southern part of Tibet, was inhabited by primitive agriculturists. Nomad



Tibetan sacred Inscription

herdsmen roamed the lake region and the desolate plateau in the north. The country was divided into numerous poor little chieftainships, and the Tibetans lived in a rude state of barbarism. Polyandry, or the sharing of one wife by all the brothers of a family, a custom which still persists in parts of Tibet, is a survival from this primitive period of Tibetan history.

At the beginning of the seventh century, one of the petty kings or chieftains of southern Tibet began the task of uniting the various Tibetan tribes. His son and successor, Srong-stan-Gampo, carried on and completed the work, and it was he who became the founder of the new imperial line of Tibetan kings who ruled the country for 275 years. After Srong-stan-Gampo had established his authority in Tibet, he proceeded to bring into

subjection great sections of Kashmir, central Asia, China, Nepal and even India. The Tibetan conquest of a substantial slice of India in the middle of the seventh century is an incident not even mentioned in Indian historical records, but it is referred to in contemporary Chinese chronicles. Tai Tsung, at this time emperor of China, had sent a mission, it will be recalled, by way of Tibet and Nepal, to King Harsha of India at Kanauj, and this Chinese mission had the misfortune to arrive in India just after Harsha's assassination. The leader of the mission, ill-treated and insulted by the usurper, immediately appealed to Nepal and Tibet for help in redressing his wrongs. Nepal at the moment was subordinate to Tibet, and Tibet itself had recently entered into friendly alliance with China. The punitive Nepalese-Tibetan army placed at the disposal of the Chinese ambassador quickly overran Assam, Bengal and Bihar. The Tibetan hold on northern India, according to the Chinese sources, was maintained for fifty years.

Srong-stan-Gampo, as ruler of a united Tibet, realized the necessity for keeping in intimate touch with generals and officials stationed in remote parts of his empire. He was greatly handicapped by the fact that Tibet had no form of writing, and he accordingly decided to send one of his ministers, Thon-mi Sambhota, to India to study and master the art of reading and writing, and to find, or devise, an alphabet suitable for rendering the Tibetan language. In the adjoining territory of Kashmir, helped by a Khotanese Brahmin, Sambhota learned Sanskrit and then worked out the principles of Tibetan grammar. Afterward he invented a new Tibetan alphabet based on the model of the Khotanese alphabet, which was derived from Gupta Sanskrit. Srong-tsan-Gampo, the Tibetan emperor, is said to have retired to a cave near Lhasa for four years to perfect himself in the new art of writing brought back from Kashmir by Sambhota.

It was also during Srong-stan-Gampo's time that Buddhism was introduced into Tibet. Credit for this goes to the emperor's

two foreign wives. One was the princess Bhrikuti, daughter of Amsuvarman, king of Nepal, who arrived in Tibet some time between 630 and 640, bringing as part of her dowry three precious Buddhist images. The other wife of Srong-tsan-Gampo was the Chinese princess Konjo, a daughter of the house of Tai Tsung, who brought along with her a highly treasured Indian sandalwood image of Buddha, which had reached China by way of central Asia. No Buddhist temples as yet existed in Tibet, and the two queens simultaneously conceived a desire to erect in Lhasa, the new Tibetan capital founded by Srong-tsan-Gampo, temples worthy of their respective images. Accordingly, in the northern part of the city, the Chinese queen built the Ramo-che, a temple still standing. The Nepalese queen, coming from a poorer country, lacked the means to build the temple she wanted, so the emperor himself built one for her. This was the Jo-khang, built in the very heart of Lhasa, the most famous shrine in Tibet to this day. After Srong-tsan-Gampo, all his successors remained ardent Buddhists with the exception of the last, under whom, in the early part of the tenth century, the Tibetan empire toppled to its fall, never again to recover its former extent and might. A long period of political chaos resulted in the division of Tibet into eastern and western kingdoms, followed by its redivision into still smaller states.

In spite of royal favor, Buddhism in Tibet contended with a powerful rival, Bon-po, or Pon-po, the old native religion of Tibet. This was a strange mixture of nature worship and necromancy, of oracle-mongering and propitiation of evil spirits through sorcery and magic, more or less identical with the Shamanism of the primitive Siberian tribes. The Bon priests, dressed in somber black, not only exercised a strong hold over the superstitious common people of Tibet, but eventually succeeded in creating their own influential party at court. Whenever they felt themselves strong enough, they instigated severe persecutions of the Buddhists. In the ninth century, during the minority of the emperor Khri-srong, they turned the great Jo-khang of

Lhasa into a slaughterhouse and temporarily removed the famous sandalwood image of Buddha which had been transferred to this shrine after the death of Srong-tsan-Gampo.

Khri-srong's son Muni, undaunted by the powerful clique opposed to him, went farther than any previous king of Tibet in his efforts to embody his Buddhist ideals in drastic reforms. He embarked on a socioeconomic experiment which sounds quite modern. By a royal decree, he confiscated the entire wealth of the country and then proceeded to redistribute it on a basis of perfect equality. The result was that the poor, no longer under any immediate compulsion to work, grew lazy and poorer than before, while the discontented rich, by incessant scheming, managed to recover all their former wealth and more. The Bons used this opportunity to foment a serious rebellion, and the king himself was poisoned by his own mother. At the end of the same century, King Ralpachan showed such excessive devotion to Buddhism that he handed over all the important state offices to monks. Ralpachan, also, was murdered, and then his brother Lang-darma became king of Tibet.

Lang-darma favored the Bons, and he at once ordered all Buddhist monks to return to lay life, put many of them to death, and ruthlessly destroyed their monasteries and sacred books. But his orgy of persecution was short-lived. One day a certain monk, disguised as a Bon priest, rode into Lhasa on a black horse. He found the king in the open square in front of Jo-khang, and with the words, "If a tyrannous king is to be disposed of, this is the way to do it," shot him through the heart with an iron-tipped arrow. This famous episode of Tibetan history became the basic theme of the popular mystery plays, falsely called "devil dances," which are performed every year in many Tibetan monasteries. The theme represents the perennial struggle between good and evil and the final triumph of good. This particular dance pantomime is performed to music by masked Tibetan monks on the very spot in Lhasa where Lang-darma met his end.

Tibetan Buddhism, with the passage of time, gradually as-

sumed its own distinctive shape. Among the manuscripts recently recovered from the caves of Tun-huang, in central Asia, are two authentic early Tibetan chronicles, perhaps the oldest manuscripts existing in the Tibetan language. They appear to date from the ninth century, but they actually deal with the opening period of Tibetan history. One of them covers the reigns of eleven early Tibetan kings, seven of them antedating Srongtsan-Gampo. The other is a diary of historical events recorded year by year, from A.D. 650 to A.D. 747. Translations of these remarkable manuscripts, when available, will certainly throw light on the introduction and development of Buddhism in Tibet. Meanwhile, all the traditional Tibetan accounts agree in naming Padma Sambhava, the "Lotus-born," as the founder of Lamaism, or Tibetan Buddhism.

This enigmatic person is supposed to have arrived in Tibet in A.D. 747, almost a century after the first introduction of Buddhism into that country. Legend has conveniently supplied him with a romantic early life which has features in common with Gotama Buddha's. He was born in Udayana, the borderland region between Kashmir and Afghanistan, from whence he derived his popular Tibetan name of Urgyen. After renouncing worldly life, Padma Sambhava went to study at Nalanda, at this period the most important center of Buddhist learning in India, but apparently did not remain long. Burning with missionary zeal, he suddenly appeared in Tibet, where he remained for fifty years, or a hundred, according to different accounts, all the while tirelessly preaching. At last, promising to return to his beloved Tibet in some future time, he rose up into the air and vanished from the sight of men. Such is the legend of the great Buddhist saint who is still worshipped all over Tibet. The statue or portrait of Padma Sambhava, easily identified by the skull drinking cup and thunderbolt scepter he is invariably represented as carrying, will be found in every orthodox monastery of Tibet to this day.

The particular type of Buddhism which Padma Sambhava brought with him to Tibet was the Buddhism prevalent in north-

ern India in his time — Mahayana Buddhism strongly tinged with Tantric ideas and practices. It had its trinities of Dhyanī Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and earthly Buddhas, to which were added female Bodhisattvas, or Taras. Padma Sambhava chose Avalokitesvara as the patron saint of Tibet, but the Taras, Maitreya the Future Buddha and Manjusri the Bodhisattva of Divine Wisdom also gained special favor in the eyes of the Tibetans. By this time, Hindu deities — in particular Shiva and his consort in their twofold, mild and terrifying aspects — had already become incorporated as protectors of the faith, within the all-embracing Buddhist pantheon. They, too, traveled to Tibet, along with Tantric rituals such as the recitation of sacred syllables, the use of mystic symbols and the performance of secret rites by joint assemblies of men and women devotees. That these tended to degenerate into orgies ultimately brought the whole Tantric system into unjustified disrepute. Padma Sambhava, to secure the triumph of Buddhism in Tibet, set about convincing the Tibetans that he himself could outdo even the Bonists in miracles and magic, and so magic and miracles became an integral part of Tibetan Buddhism. The Bonist deities and demons who suffered defeat at his hands were also finally admitted to a place among the humbler ranks of servitors in the Buddhist heavens, as a compromise to placate the opposition.

Buddhist texts in Sanskrit and Buddhist images and paintings began to find their way to Tibet in ever-increasing quantities. Nepal, already long Buddhist, was in a favorable position to help along this trend. The people of northern Nepal were half-Tibetan, and Tibetan was their own language. Nepalese craftsmen were invited to become the first tutors of Buddhist Tibetan craftsmen. Chinese art conventions also impressed themselves upon Tibetan art, though to a less extent than Indian and Nepalese. Eventually, the combination of Indian and Chinese influences absorbed by the cruder Tibetan genius produced a new style, which was characteristically Tibetan.

In spite of the zeal and ardor of Padma Sambhava's numerous

converts, Tibetan Buddhism, with its complicated background, remained in a highly confused state for the better part of a century. On this account King Khri-srong, father of the social experimenter Muni, invited the Indian scholar-monk Santa Rakshita to come to Lhasa from Nalanda in the early part of the ninth century and establish Buddhism on a firmer basis. There was still no Buddhist church organization in Tibet. The first Tibetan Buddhist monastery was built for Santa Rakshita at Sam-ye, thirty miles southwest of Lhasa, at this time. Twelve Nalanda monks also arrived to ordain the first seven Tibetan monks. Manuscripts were collected, and Indian and Tibetan scholars set to work to make Tibetan translations of the Sanskrit Buddhist texts.

Monasticism was now established in Tibet, but sinister forces were working to drag it down into a state of corruption. Reformers were constantly needed to purge Tibetan Buddhism of its preoccupation with magic and omens and to check the love of pomp and luxury and worse vices, to which the Tibetan monks were ever ready to succumb. Of the great reformers, the first was Atisa, a famous Indian of Bengal, who came to Tibet in the middle of the eleventh century. Another was the Tibetan poet and mystic Mila-rapa, of the same century. The third, Tsong-khapa, was born about two hundred years later on the spot where Kunbum monastery now stands, in the eastern Tibetan province of Amdo.

A certain king of Tibet who had handed over the throne to his younger brother and become a monk in the early part of the eleventh century was greatly troubled by the impurities with which he found Buddhism defiled. He felt that better translations of the sacred texts and commentaries might help to remove mistaken ideas, and he arranged to send twenty-one young Tibetan men to Kashmir for study. Nineteen of them died within a short time, but one of two survivors, Rinchen-stan-po, returned to Tibet after many years with important new translations he had made. He also brought back with him thirty-two

Indian artists to beautify the Tibetan temples and monasteries. Dilapidated frescoes of this period, possibly by these very men, were discovered a few years ago in some monasteries of western Tibet by an Italian explorer, Tucci. Unlike the majority of Tibetan paintings and sculptures which reflect Pala and Sena art influences derived from eastern India between the eighth and thirteenth centuries, these western Tibetan frescoes seem much closer to western India, particularly to Ajanta, in conception and technique.

After repeated invitations, Atisa finally reached western Tibet, where he first went to stay at Tholing monastery, not far from Lake Manasarovar. Here his Tibetan followers, led by his best-known disciple Brom-ston, soon formed a new Tibetan sect known as Kadampa. From Tholing, Atisa went on to Sam-ye, in central Tibet, eventually dying there, after thirteen years of strenuous work. At the time when Atisa left India, he was considered the most distinguished of all Buddhist scholars. After pursuing his earlier studies in all the chief Buddhist centers of northern India, he had won great fame by going to Sumatra to study under the distinguished Dharmakirti. Afterwards he had become the chief professor at Vikramasila university in Bihar. In Tibet he did much to shift magical practices into the background and to re-establish Buddhism on a higher plane. He preached a purer form of Mahayana Buddhism, and placed great emphasis on true learning and scholarship.

Nineteen years after Atisa's death, a Tibetan noble founded Sakya monastery in the southern province of Tsang, on the road from Nepal to Shigatse, about fifty miles northeast of Everest. Its original inmates described themselves as the "Old Ones," claiming to be followers of Padma Sambhava. In time, however, Sakya came to be the recognized headquarters of the unreformed sect of Dukpas, or "Red Caps." The Sakya abbots married and established the abbotship on hereditary lines. Yet Sakya monastery rendered a great service to the cause of Tibetan Buddhism by promoting the translation of Indian religious liter-

ature into Tibetan for some three hundred years. The tradition of scholarship, introduced into Tibet by Atisa, was constantly reinforced by the arrival of other Indian scholars. The Sakya library became widely known for its marvelous collection of manuscripts, and its temples as well as the palaces of its abbots were repositories of beautiful works of art, both Indian and Tibetan. One of the Indian scholar-monks who added special luster to Sakya was Sri Bhadra, onetime head of Vikramasila and preceptor of the Pala king of Bihar and Bengal. When Vikramasila was burned down by the Muslims in 1204, Sri Bhadra and several of his companions sought refuge at Sakya.

As late as the fourteenth century, the scholarly reputation of the Sakya monks was still undimmed. Bu-ston, before founding his own monastery at Shalu, close to Shigatse, was for a time a teacher at Sakya. Access to the great Sakya library made it possible for Bu-ston to undertake the gigantic task of compiling the first authoritative edition of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon. He began by getting copies made of all the Tibetan translations of Buddhist texts then in existence. He then rearranged these in chronological order and divided them into the two vast collections known as the *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*. The *Kanjur*, in some 108 volumes, comprises more than a thousand texts, all traditionally representing the actual works of the Buddha. About a dozen of these are Hinayana Buddhist texts and three hundred are Tantric texts. The rest are Mahayana works. The *Tanjur*, in 225 volumes, is made up of works on philosophy and mysticism, grammar and logic, medicine, a few purely literary compositions, and all the innumerable commentaries on the *Kanjur*. The original copies of the *Kanjur* and *Tanjur* prepared by Bu-ston are still preserved in Shalu monastery. Both collections were cut on wood blocks at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and printed editions are still being made from these blocks. Shorter versions of the *Kanjur* and *Tanjur* have also come into existence.

Love of magic is deeply rooted in the Tibetan nature, and it

was not to be expected that it would remain suppressed. The mystic powers of the Yogi, rather than his spiritual realizations, were really the compelling attraction to ordinary Tibetans. The cult of the Eighty-four Great Sorcerers, or Siddhas, soon had devotees all over Tibet, as it did in Bengal, central Asia and China. The Eighty-four Yogis, who numbered some women among them, were supposed to be Buddhist saints, but it was the feats of magic with which they were credited, such as flying through the air, which made them truly popular.

Atisa was still alive when the charming figure of Mila-rapa appeared upon the scene. It was his life's effort to lift magic to the plane of true Yoga, or mystic union with God. As a child, Mila-rapa suffered bitter poverty because of an uncle who cheated his widowed mother out of the family property. The mother apprenticed her young son to a magician in order that he might learn Black Magic, punish the wicked uncle and restore the family fortunes. But Mila-rapa was at heart a mystic, not a magician. After he had mastered the secret art of evoking destructive hailstorms, he felt weighed down by guilt. Recognizing the great master whom he sought in Marpa, who had once been a disciple of Atisa's in India, he joined Marpa and underwent years of severe discipline, his determination to obtain spiritual liberation in this life never wavering. Years with Marpa were succeeded by years of hermit life, during which Mila-rapa lived in inaccessible mountain caves and subsisted on nettles. At last, emerging from a cave, he adopted the life of a wandering monk.

Mila was not only a mystic but the greatest of all Tibetan poets. He chose to instruct the Tibetan people through songs, and his "Hundred Thousand Songs" are now familiar from one end of the country to the other. In these songs he describes the mystic beauty of the vast solitudes and the ineffable joy of the contemplative life. The Tibetan hermit sect of Marpa and Mila, the Kargyut-pa, gave rise to several great monastic institutions which became powerful rivals of the monks of Sakya. Mila him-

self was later canonized, and Tibetan paintings frequently show him with his right hand cupped behind his ear, as if listening to nature's distant echo, answering back his own song.

As monasteries in Tibet grew richer and more powerful, worldliness and indifference to monastic rules increased. Scholars became fewer, and once more religion in Tibet reverted for most to gross superstitions and unhealthy practices. It was at such a psychological moment, in the middle of the fourteenth century, that Tsong-khapa, the greatest of Tibetan religious reformers, was born. His father was a poor herdsman of the village of Tsong-khapa, in Amdo, from which he took his name. After receiving his early schooling at the nearest monastery, Tsong-khapa left Amdo when he was fifteen and went to Sakya for higher training. One of his teachers at Sakya was a disciple of Bu-ston. Tsong-khapa was deeply impressed by Bu-ston's achievements. He became convinced that people could be weaned from their ghost worship only by the right kind of education and by the example of stern self-discipline set before them by the monks. He himself practised this discipline, both as a monk and as a hermit. Then at last, ready to begin his great mission, he went to Lhasa in 1390.

Tsong-khapa's reforms were thoroughgoing. He insisted first and foremost on strict celibacy for all monks. He also denounced the use of intoxicating liquor, and demanded extreme simplicity in dress. He advocated the reintroduction of the old Buddhist practice of fortnightly confession in open assembly and the observance of an annual retreat. He introduced as a new measure an annual week of prayer and fasting, for both laymen and monks. Tsong-khapa was not opposed to Tantric Buddhism of the right path, and his greatest literary work was his codification of the Tantric writings, but he strongly opposed sorcery, magical practices and humbug. The new sect which embodied Tsong-khapa's reforms was called Gelugpa, "Virtuous." It also came to be known as "Yellow Caps," from the yellow hoods

worn by the monks of this order, in contrast to the red hoods of the older, unreformed sects and the black hats of the Bons.

Before Tsong-khapa's death in 1414, three huge monastic seminaries of the new sect had been founded in Lhasa, and thirty thousand followers had swarmed into them. Tsong-khapa himself founded Galdan monastery, some twenty-five miles outside the capital. It is famous not only because Tsong-khapa's tomb is to be seen there, but because this monastery is considered the highest educational center in present-day Tibet. Its monks have always preserved their reputation for piety and strict discipline. Within five miles of Lhasa are the other two great "Yellow Cap" monasteries, Depun and Sera. They were built in Tsong-khapa's lifetime by two of his disciples. Still another Gelugpa monastery, Tashi-lhumpo, was founded at Shigatse, in southern Tibet, by Tsong-khapa's nephew, who after Tsong-khapa's death became the second Chief Lama of the Order. Naturally the swift rise of the Gelugpas and the position of immense power they acquired at the Tibetan capital through the establishment of their great monasteries in the immediate vicinity, stirred up the antagonism of all the older sects. An era of bitter monastic rivalry set in, inviting Mongol intervention.

As early as the eighth century, some of the Buddhist scriptures were translated into the Mongol language and written down in the Syriac-Uigur script adopted by the Naimans, one of the principal Mongolian tribes. This fact is revealed in a curious roundabout way. A Chinese work records that an Indian monk named Prajna came to China in A.D. 780, in the belief, it is stated, that he would find the Bodhisattva Manjusri actually living there. Prajna failed to find Manjusri, but he found Adam, Bishop of the Nestorian Christian Church in China, whose name is also mentioned in the inscription of the famous Nestorian monument erected just at this time in the old city of Chang-an, or Sian-fu. Prajna and Adam set to work to translate from Mongolian into Chinese seven volumes of an unnamed Buddhist

their heads and become Buddhist monks. It must have been just then, or at any rate only a few years later, that the elder Polos, father and uncle of Marco, first reached Chang-du. Kublai still maintained an open mind. He invited the Polos on their return home to act as his personal ambassadors to the Pope, and sent along by them a letter asking for one hundred educated Christian priests to be dispatched to China. If they could convince him that Christianity was after all the best religion, he said, he and his subjects would at once become Christians. In 1275, the Polos returned to China for the second time bringing young Marco with them on this occasion, but they had not been able to persuade any priests to accompany them, and in the interim, Kublai Khan had already made up his mind that Tibetan Buddhism was the religion best suited to the Mongols.

Phags-pa remained near the Great Khan for twelve years, exerting considerable influence over him, and it was at the request of the emperor that he devised a phonetic system of writing for the Mongolian language, based on the Tibetan script. By an imperial decree, issued in 1269, this new script was declared to be the official script for the Mongolian language to be adopted throughout Kublai Khan's empire. It was called Bash-pah, after its inventor. Though it was subsequently employed for some of Kublai's inscriptions and coins, in less than a century it had altogether disappeared from China and Mongolia. The Mongol people preferred a reversion to the old Uigur script previously used by them. Phags-pa nevertheless remained in great favor with Kublai Khan, who appointed him head of the Tibetan Buddhist Church and also nominated him to be his viceroy in Tibet, with full powers of civil administration. Phags-pa, on his part, performed the ceremony of consecrating Kublai Khan emperor of China. The Sakya abbots, from the time of Phags-pa's elevation to the headship of the Buddhist church and his nomination as viceroy, became virtual rulers of a great part of Tibet. Twenty-one Sakya abbots in succession ruled the country through regents directly appointed by them.

In the latter half of the fifteenth century, and through the whole of the sixteenth, monastic wars raged all over Tibet. Tibetan monasteries obtained their support from the lands they owned, and to administer and protect these against rivals, armed guards became a necessity. Soon, these Tibetan monastic guards transformed themselves into monastic armies, and the army under the control of Sakya monastery gained control of the whole of Tsang province and was particularly formidable. It invaded the territories of rival monasteries, and violent battles took place. Monasteries were burned down, and thousands of their inmates were slaughtered. Early in the seventeenth century the Gelugpa monks of Depun monastery at Lhasa suffered a particularly horrible massacre. The head Lama of the Gelugpas appealed to a Mongolian chief who had recently occupied northeastern Tibet to help him in the fight against Tsang, and the invading Mongolian army marched south and defeated the Tsang army. In 1642, with Mongolian support, the abbot of the reformed "Yellow Cap" sect then assumed the position of Grand Lama and supreme ruler of Tibet, and at the same time the reformed sect of Tsong-khapa was declared the official religion of Tibet.

Friendly relations between the Yellow sect of Tibetan Buddhism and Mongolia were already of long standing. The third head of the order had been invited to Mongolia by Altan Khan, chief of the Tumed Mongols, and had received from him in 1578 the title of Te-le, or Dalai, Lama. The word *dalai*, a modern corruption of the Mongolian word "te-le," or "ocean," was intended to compliment the recipient of the title by implying that he was an "Ocean of Wisdom." The title became hereditary with the Grand Lamas of the Yellow sect, and was retained by the temporal rulers of Tibet. The present Dalai Lama, a minor, is the fourteenth to bear this Mongolian title. Ties with Mongolia were cemented more firmly than ever when a Mongol actually became the fourth Dalai Lama, and when the fifth Dalai Lama assumed the supreme rulership of Tibet through Mongol intervention. It was he who, in 1645, undertook to build the great

Potala Palace, on the side of Red Hill, overlooking Lhasa, the residence ever since of the Dalai Lamas of Tibet. The fifth Dalai Lama also made the interesting discovery that he was an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, and that the abbot of Tashi-lhumbo monastery, who was the successor of his own spiritual teacher, was in reality an incarnation of the Dhyani Buddha Amitabha. Here was the old Indian concept of rebirth and incarnation taking on a new form in Tibet, just as it had in Cambodia and Java.

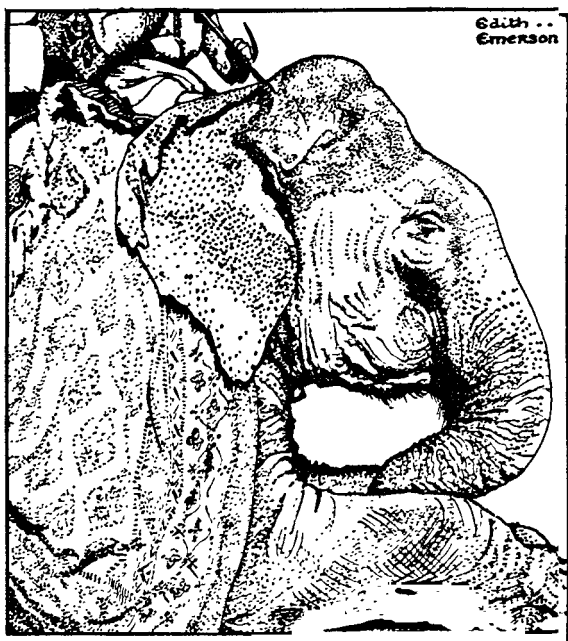
It was in the thirteenth century that the first incarnated Lama was proclaimed, a small boy, suddenly recognized as the incarnated Lama of a Kargyut-pa monastery. The idea took root and spread rapidly, and the Sakya abbots, who were permitted to marry, and among whom the position of abbot was hereditary, also insisted on becoming incarnations. They, indeed, became incarnations of Padma Sambhava! After Tsong-khapa's death, his followers also fell into line, declaring that Tsong-khapa had been an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Manjusri. The epidemic of incarnations, which were now popularly called "Living Buddhas," naturally spread with Tibetan Buddhism to China, Mongolia and Manchuria, and today there are hundreds of incarnated Lama abbots serving in as many Buddhist monasteries of the Tibetan type. Even Srong-tsan-Gampo's Nepalese and Chinese wives were retroactively declared to have been incarnations of Tara, and Tara is still supposed to reincarnate herself in the Abbess of Samding monastery, curiously enough, a monastery of monks, over which she presides.

The incarnation idea has found a unique expression in Tibet, where the temporal as well as the religious ruler of the country is chosen by what the rest of the world would call mere chance. After the death of a Grand Lama, a search is immediately made for all male children in Tibet born about the same time. The souls of the dead, according to Tibetan ideas, remain for forty-nine days in the state of *bardo*, or disembodiment, before incarnating themselves anew in fresh bodies, but the period of

disembodiment need not be quite exact. Besides, it is difficult to ascertain the precise time at which Tibetan children are born, since an astrologer is not always conveniently at hand to note the position of the stars at the child's birth. The search for an incarnation sometimes continues for years. Eventually, potential candidates are assembled, and the test of identity is made by confronting the children with various articles which were the personal property of the dead Grand Lama. The child who, by signs or words, indicates that he recognizes the articles as his own is then declared to be the new incarnation. If, as sometimes happens, only one candidate can be found, further ceremonies may be dispensed with. This happened in the case of the latest Dalai Lama. If, on the other hand, candidates are too numerous, a preliminary selection may be made by the high ecclesiastical authorities who control such affairs. The child proclaimed as the new Grand Lama is at once removed to a monastery and put under the charge of teachers whose duty it is to train him for his future responsibilities as ruler of Tibet, both spiritual and temporal. During his minority, a regent acts for him, and a struggle for power often ensues between the Dalai Lama and his regent. It has not passed unnoted that four Dalai Lamas in succession, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth, all died prematurely, and that the thirteenth, who died in 1933 at a ripe old age, had taken the precaution to remove his regent almost at the beginning of his reign.

So the long story of India's cultural expansion in Asia, over a period of a thousand years and more, draws to a close. But the ancient friendship with China remains unspoiled, and very recently Indian sympathy with Indonesia in its struggle against Dutch supremacy, and with the people of Indo-China against the French, has reasserted itself in no uncertain terms. In Ceylon and Burma, unfortunate economic rivalries and a new sense of political nationalism awakened in both those countries have produced some friction between Indian immigrants and the Sinhalese and Burmese. Yet in its own struggle for political free-

dom from Western domination, India has shown every desire for the rest of Asia to share in that freedom. The ties of the present, as well as the past, are the Buddhist and Hindu legends so beautifully sculptured on temple walls in Java, Cambodia, Burma and Siam, the traditional music, dance and drama enjoyed to this day in the island of Bali, the Buddhist and Brahmin priests jointly performing their religious ceremonies in Bali and Nepal, the palm-leaf manuscripts, locked up under triple seals, constituting the treasures of the Tibetan monastic libraries, the living forms of art and craftsmanship in all these countries, the symbolism, religious or artistic, which has vital significance for millions of Asiatics. Asia is united at least in its awareness of a common cultural heritage from India. In the Asia of the future, India seems destined to lead again. She can be counted upon to support principles and ideals which spring from a spiritual foundation.



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